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ON THE COVER: *Sea Wolves* by Nicolas Trudigan. The painting shows Captain Erich Topp at the helm of *Der Rote Teufel* (the Red Devil) during the Battle of the Atlantic.
Photo: Alamy Images

Welcome

By Dr Neil Faulkner

Is wartime grand strategy rational? Or is it the outcome of power struggles between rival vested interests? Probably a bit of both, and British grand strategy 70 years ago seems evidence of that.

Last month, we had a critical piece on the Bomber Offensive (and our Opinion piece this issue comes from one of our own Editorial Advisory Board, Squadron Leader Colin Pomeroy, who firmly takes issue with us).

We now look at the Battle of the Atlantic. The argument is that this was very close-run and absolutely decisive. Had Dönitz's U-boats closed the sea-lanes around Britain, the Nazis would have won the war. That they came so close was partly because of the diversion of air-power into the Bomber Offensive.

Why were the priorities so skewed? Because whereas Coastal Command was part of an inter-service response to the U-boat threat, Bomber Command was fighting its own war and thereby vindicating the RAF's claim to independent and equal status with the other services.

The politicians and the joint high command should have established proper priorities. They did not. Politics was again the reason. Churchill and his commanders needed cover against the fact they were fighting in the Far East and the Middle East instead of opening a Second Front in north-west Europe. The Bomber Offensive – striking directly at Germany – was their answer to Stalin.

Also this issue, Ross Cowan re-analyses the slaughter of the Scottish aristocracy at Flodden 500 years ago, Robert Bateman explores Custer's career before the Little Big Horn, Peter Hoskins reconstructs the Black Prince's victorious Poitiers campaign, and Julian Spilsbury concludes his two-part account of the Italo-Turkish War in Libya, part of our new Road to War series.

Neil Faulkner.

Who we are:

Military History Monthly aims to cover conflict on land, at sea, and in the air through all periods of history, with expert commentary written in an intelligent and accessible way.

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Let us know what you think...

We would love to hear your opinions on this issue of the magazine. What are your favourite bits? What should we cover in the next issue? You can give us your feedback:

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DISPATCHES

Our round-up of this month's military history news stories.

COLOSSUS CREATOR COMMEMORATED
COLOSSUS
A PART OF THE MACHINE BUILT AT BLETCHLEY PARK IN WORLD WAR II
PRESENTED TO THE DIRECTOR NSA BY DIRECTOR GCHQ TO MARK THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE UKUSA AGREEMENT
MARCH 1986

BT is celebrating the life and work of Tommy Flowers MBE, a telecoms pioneer and creator of the world's first programmable computer, with a memorial sculpture and the launch of a scholarship and award in his name.

The unveiling ceremony of the bronze portrait bust in December 2013 will mark the 70th anniversary of Flowers' development of 'Colossus', a thermionic valve-based programmable computer that successfully broke the Lorenz cypher used by Hitler and the German High Command during the Second World War.

Colossus went on to provide intelligence that proved critical to the success of the D-Day landings, and made a significant contribution to the Allied war effort.

The memorial will be officially unveiled at Adastral Park in Suffolk, BT's global research and development headquarters. The sculpture, which was commissioned by Ian Livingston, Chief Executive of BT, in close consultation with the Flowers estate, will be executed by James Butler, a member of the Royal Academy, Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, and one of the UK's foremost figurative sculptors.

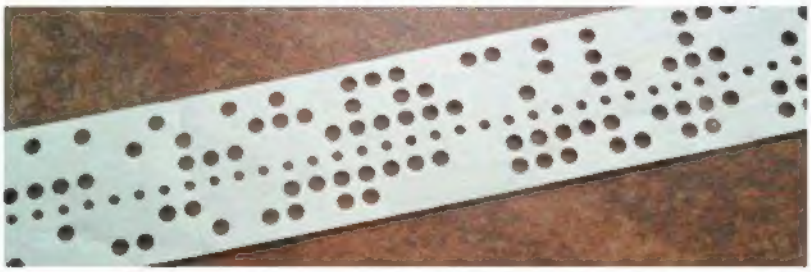
Above Part of Bletchley Park's Colossus machine. **Below** Encoded messages Colossus helped crack.

In addition, BT is launching a Tommy Flowers Scholarship for students in Suffolk who will be starting Year 12 in September 2013. Aimed at supporting career development within the IT sector, the scholarship will comprise academic mentoring, financial support for participation in relevant courses or activities, and work experience at BT.

In conjunction with the scholarship, a Tommy Flowers Award for Commitment to Computing will also be launched. It will be presented to schools in Suffolk for inspirational teaching of computing science at Key Stage 2 and 3. The awards programme will comprise workshops provided by BT to both students and teachers, and access to BT events and experiences. BT will also provide a financial contribution to support the development of the computing curriculum of the winning school.

Tim Whitley, Managing Director Research & Innovation, BT, and Managing Director Adastral Park, said: 'Tommy Flowers is an unsung hero of computer science and BT is proud to be commemorating his life and work. Adastral Park continues to innovate in computer science and we want to play our part in finding the next generation of innovators.

'The Tommy Flowers Scholarship provides real support and mentoring to students, but also to teachers and schools who are vital in encouraging the next generation.'



BOMBER DRAWINGS AT THE RAF MUSEUM

Design drawings that could help restore a shot-down Second World War German bomber recovered from the English Channel have been handed to the RAF Museum at the Royal International Air Tattoo.

The drawings, recently presented by aerospace and defence company EADS, will assist with the rebuilding process of the aircraft recently brought up from the seabed.

Downed in August 1940, this Dornier's historical importance is immense, as the recovered aircraft is the world's only surviving example of the type, despite the fact that more than 1,500 airframes were manufactured.

The most frequently produced model was the Do-17-Z2, which was operated by a crew of four and carried a maximum bomb-load of 2,000lbs. Over 400 Do-17s participated in the Battle of Britain, during the course of which nearly 200 were destroyed. Research by the Air Historical Branch and the RAF Museum suggests that the wreck is a Do-17-Z2 lost on 26 August 1940, at the height of the Battle of Britain.

Robin Southwell, CEO of EADS UK, made the presentation to Peter Dye, Director of the RAF Museum, alongside Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, Chief of the Air Staff.

Speaking after the presentation, Robin Southwell said, 'Now that the aircraft has been recovered from the water, we can see not just that it is in remarkable condition, but how much work needs to be done, and to do that we need to understand how the aircraft was constructed in the first place.

'EADS has access to more than 7,000 drawings which would actually enable the aircraft to be built from scratch, and these are the first 2,500 of those drawings, and should help us restore the aircraft to as close to its original state as we can.

'The work of the RAF Museum is absolutely vital. You cannot decide where you are going unless you know where you have come from. The aerospace industry is all about knowledge, and then applying that knowledge innovatively.'

Top The design drawings are presented to (from the left) Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, Chief of the Air Staff, and Peter Dye, Director of the RAF Museum, by Robin Southwell, CEO of EADS UK. **Below** A wartime Dornier Do-17, similar to the one recently recovered from the English Channel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHURCHILL TANKS RESTORED FOR D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

A partner at a prestigious London law firm with a passion for tanks has written a revealing account of the fighting history of the Churchill tank, as well as the painstaking restoration process involved in bringing them back to life.

Nigel Montgomery, whose Churchill Tank Project owns three from World War II, is working with a team to restore them to full running order ahead of next year's 70th anniversary of D-Day. Their work is supported and assisted by the Tank Museum at Bovington.

Nigel said: 'I have always been interested in the role of tanks in World War II and the Korean War, and with so few veterans of those conflicts remaining, I wanted to found a restoration project to preserve the memory of what they did... Having started my restoration work with a Cold War era Chieftain tank, which was returned to full running order, I set out to build a complete project to restore, then use, truly historic British wartime tanks.'

GRANTS ANNOUNCED

Communities across the country have been given the green light to start projects that will mark the forthcoming World War I Centenary thanks to money from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The first HLF initiative was the £6m small grants programme, announced by the Prime Minister at the Imperial War Museum last October, which aims to help communities explore, conserve, and share their First World War heritage.

Thanks to the grants, young people in Kent will be looking at the role of football during the 1914 Christmas Day Truce, blind and partially sighted groups in Wolverhampton will begin researching how the war advanced ophthalmic medicine, people across the UK (including in Abbotskerswell in Devon) will investigate the names on their local war memorials, the contribution of Scotland's nurses to the war effort will be shared and marked, and the story of soldiers from Bolton who fought and died at Gallipoli will be remembered.

MONTY'S MOTOR

Work is now complete on the car used by Monty during his campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy during World War II. Using archive photographs of the Humber Super Snipe staff car taken in Italy in 1944, the Conservation Team at the Imperial War Museum Duxford has managed to replicate the exact camouflage finish that it carried at the time.

The Conservation Team carefully sanded down through seven layers of paint to find this original pattern. The seats have been refitted and recovered in leather – colour-matched to the original seats – and the dashboard has been stove-enamelled using a sample taken from Monty's original car.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Send your thoughts on issues raised in *Military History Monthly* to:

Post: *Military History Monthly*, Lamb House, Church Street, London, W4 2PD
Email: *feedback@military-history.org*

FRENCH WERE THE ONLY PROS

Chris Skidmore's excellent piece on the Battle of Bosworth (*MHM* 34), and, in particular, his conjecture that John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, may have attempted to falsify the historical record to his own advantage omits one major fact.

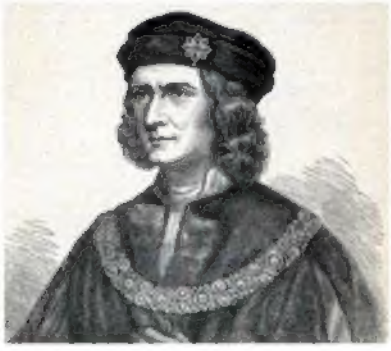
The only professional troops present at the battle were those in the 1,800-strong French contingent, commanded by Philibert de Chandée.

There had been no serious fighting in England for 13 years, and few Englishmen had raised anything more than a feather duster in anger in that time. Oxford himself had spent 10 of those years in prison, and although he was the titular commander of the Lancastrian vanguard can anyone really doubt that it was Philibert who was actually in command?

Embarrassing as it is, this was the classic encounter of professionalism versus passion, with the inevitable result. The only hardened killers on the battlefield were the French, and they proved it by their discipline and ferocity.

The parsimonious victor Henry VII only created three Earldoms during his reign, and one of them was for Philibert de Chandée, as Earl of Bath. Whatever Henry's other faults, he knew how to acknowledge the real victor of Bosworth.

Mark Corby
London



SEALED, NOT SIGNED

I read Dr Richard Stone's 'Opinion' piece (*MHM* 34) on the proposed tomb for Richard III just after reading in the national press that Leicester Cathedral has agreed to a tomb fit for the king's status, so the Richard III Society is to be congratulated for this achievement. I also greatly enjoyed the following articles on the king, Bosworth, and his death.

However, I was disappointed to see that in the summaries of monarchs who lost their thrones you alluded to the signing of Magna Carta in 1215. As 2015 is the 800th anniversary of this agreement between King John and his barons, it would be a major achievement if everyone could acknowledge that the Great Charter was sealed, not signed.

Mary Moore
London

SCUM OF THE EARTH

It was rather depressing that the article on Vitoria (*MHM* 35) produced the tired old quote about the 'scum of the earth' and failed to complete it, as appears to be the norm nowadays. The quote should read: 'are the very scum of the earth. People talk of their enlisting from their fine military feeling – all stuff – no such thing. Some of our men enlist from having got bastard children – some for minor offences – many more for drink; but you can hardly conceive such a set brought together, and it really is wonderful that we should have made them the fine fellows they are.'

Hugh McCormack

BRUNEVAL MYTH

Reading the article on the Bruneval raid (*MHM* 34) I was amazed to see that the sidebar on John Frost includes the myth that '2 Para' captured Arnhem Bridge and held it for several days. Granted, a mixed group of airborne soldiers under Frost's command took the north end of the bridge and held it, but they never captured the bridge. Frost's command included soldiers from units other than his own, which was 2nd Parachute Battalion and not 2 Para (a modern terminology). These included men of 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron under the redoubtable Freddy Gough.

Richard Doherty
Prehan

WHAT ABOUT THE USAAF?

As a former WWII Aviator I was interested in your comprehensive review of the 1943 Strategic Bombing Campaign (*MHM*36). Perhaps a little more space might have been given to the USAAF and the major part they played in crippling German war industry with their specific attacks on military/industrial targets. To give one example, on 12 May 1944 the 8th Air Force dispatched 886 B-17s and B-24s, escorted by 735 fighters, to bomb five synthetic oil refineries, all crucial to the German war effort. The *Luftwaffe* put up its strongest fighter response and German command and control worked perfectly. But the bombers could not be stopped and the refineries were reached, bombed, and heavily damaged. The 8th Air Force lost 46 bombers and 7 fighters, the *Luftwaffe* lost 60 fighters with 28 pilots killed in action. By 21 July 1944 all of Germany's aircraft fuel plants were out of operation. Production of aviation fuel dropped from 180,000 tonnes in March 1944, to 20,000 tonnes that November.

As for the British 'Area Bombing' policy, perhaps in some future edition you could summarise the Butt Report of July 1941, a report which led directly to that policy, and the choice of the first target, Lubeck, in March 1942.

Dick Harrison
York.

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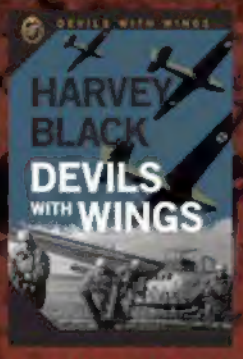

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OTT ON BOMBER COMMAND

Expert opinions from *MHM* readers and military historians.

Colin Pomeroy, retired RAF squadron leader and member of *MHM*'s Editorial Advisory Board, takes issue with Editor Neil Faulkner's analysis of the Bomber Offensive (*MHM* 36)

It would be remiss of me not to pass comment on the first article in your three-part study of British Grand Strategy in 1943. Maybe I could make observations on some of the words in the article which seem misplaced.

1. *Historians are duty-bound to unpick legends.*

This is not necessarily so, for the job of the serious historian is to uncover the truth and not necessarily to unpick anything, for many legends are based upon genuine fact and should not be unpicked unless they are false. 'Picked over', yes; but 'unpicked', not necessarily.

2. *The legend is the gloss on a mad, murderous reality.*

Surely if you are making a realistic assessment of Bomber Command's mainstream campaign in 1943, the use of terminology such as this – and other similarly emotive terminology in your article – reduces your case to the sort of thing that one would expect in a Guardian leader article rather than a top-quality publication 'written in an intelligent way'?

> Away from Russia, where Allied support was already magnificent, where might air-power have been used more effectively?

3. *The issue has been given added piquancy by the recent rehabilitation of Bomber Command implicit in official commemoration.*

You refer here to the controversy surrounding the Bomber Harris statue erected in 1992 and the Bomber Command Memorial unveiled in 2012. I fully appreciate that you are not in any way critical of the aircrew of Bomber Command, and endorse (and fully agree with) your sentiments to this effect. But you seem to imply widespread public dismay over these memorials. This would seem not to be a matter of scientific historical analysis but of your own very personal opinion. Upon what research do you base this? How many people did you interview to be able to state 'some see it as a monument to the destruction of 600 German cities and the killing of up to 600,000 German civilians'?

4. *The resources dedicated to the Bomber Offensive would have been better dedicated to other ways of war [and] using military power to destroy German aircraft, tanks, and artillery on the battlefield would have been far more targeted.*

Away from Russia, where Allied support was already magnificent, save for Operation Husky in the second half of 1943 there was no other battlefield. Where might the air-power have been used more effectively? I would agree, however, that the anti-submarine effort could certainly have done with a boost, though even here, by May 1943, the German Kriegsmarine had effectively lost the Battle of the Atlantic.

5. *The ugly truth is that the German working class had long been Harris's primary target.*

This implies that Harris was fighting some sort of class war. This was not the case per say, for, even if he was terribly misguided, he targeted the workers' homes as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.

6. *Statistical witch-doctors [and] boggle-eyed hype.*

To use terms such as these, and thereby to deliver an underhand insult to the intelligence of those working in Bomber Command, surely belittles your argument.

There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the general gist of your argument is correct: Harris did make serious mistakes and was very blinker-visioned. But to discuss Bomber Command activity in this way – with, of course, the wonderful benefit of hindsight – is far from the normal high standard which *Military History Monthly* usually achieves.

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The Battle of the Atlantic

This was a critical year for British grand strategy. The Battle of the Atlantic was almost lost. The opening of a Second Front was postponed. Yet up to a third of the British war effort was dedicated to bomber production. *MHM* Editor **Neil Faulkner** continues his short series on British grand strategy in 1943 with an analysis of the struggle for maritime supremacy in the Atlantic.

The German cryptographers of the *B-Dienst* radio-monitoring service had just broken the Allied codes used in communications with Atlantic convoys. They knew that a slow convoy, SC-122, was heading for the 'Black Gap' in the mid-Atlantic where air cover was non-existent, and that a fast convoy, HX-229, was coming up behind.

Admiral Dönitz ordered his wolf-packs to intercept, and the U-boats of the *Raubgraf*, *Stürmer*, and *Dränger* group were vectored onto their targets. It was mid-March 1943, and the long, groping battle for control of the sea-lanes leading to Britain, a battle waged over five years across millions of square miles of ocean, was coming to its climax.

The convoys were sailing from Halifax to Britain, the slow with 52 ships, the fast with 25. A wolf-pack of 12 U-boats made contact with the slow, another of eight with the fast, and over the following three days and nights they attacked with impunity. Then the fast caught up with the slow, and the two convoys merged into a single mass of merchant ships and escort vessels. At the same time, more U-boats joined the battle, forming a single 38-strong wolf-pack, swamping the defence and wreaking terrible destruction.

The Battle of Convoys SC-122 and HX-229 lasted several days, ending only when the beleaguered ships entered the protection of the eastern air-umbrella. The Allies lost 21 ships, totalling 141,000 tons; only one U-boat was sunk.

The losing battle

The Germans appeared to be winning the Battle of the Atlantic. The Admiralty later recorded that 'the Germans never came so near to disrupting communication between the New World and the Old as in the first 20 days of March 1943'.

For Churchill, with responsibility for the war effort as a whole, the implications were awesome. The war itself hung in the balance. 'The Battle of the Atlantic,' he later recalled, 'was the dominating factor all through the war.

Top A naval officer on a merchantman during an Atlantic convoy mission in 1943. Note the AA gun behind. **Above** The destruction of the *Bismarck* in May 1941. Germany waged maritime guerrilla war in the Atlantic, deploying ships, mines, aircraft, and submarines. It was not at first clear that it was the U-boats that posed the greatest danger to Allied shipping.

Never for one moment could we forget that everything elsewhere depended on its outcome.'

This was the conflict above all others that caused him the greatest anxiety: 'The only thing that really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril... It did not take the form of flaring battles and glittering achievements. It manifested itself through statistics, diagrams, and curves unknown to the nation, incomprehensible to the public.'

In mid-March 1943, the numbers and the lines went critical. U-boat strength had reached a peak and Allied shipping losses soared to unsustainable levels. Unless the tide of battle in the grey wastes was reversed, the British would be starved into submission.

Maritime lifeline

Of all the major powers, except for Japan, another industrialised island, Britain was the most dependent on overseas supply. This had long been true. Britain had built a maritime empire in the 18th century and pioneered the industrial revolution in the 19th century. Neither the large population nor the booming industries of the island could exist for more than a few weeks without an uninterrupted flow of foreign imports.

In 1939 Britain needed to import 55 million tons of goods by sea per annum, and to achieve this she maintained the largest merchant marine in the world, comprising 3,000 ocean-going ships and 1,000 large coastal ships, 21 million tons in total, manned by 160,000 men. To protect it, at the beginning of the war, the Royal Navy had 220 vessels equipped with echo-sounding Asdic – a mix of 165 destroyers, 35 sloops and corvettes, and 20 armed trawlers.

> The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war.
>
> *Winston Churchill*

Left A British convoy assembles prior to leaving port at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic.

In the context of world war, the flow across the Atlantic of food, raw materials, machine-tools, vehicles, weapons, and munitions became a matter of supreme strategic importance – dwarfing, as Churchill understood, all other considerations ▷

Above Grand-Admiral Karl Dönitz (1891-1980), U-boat commander until January 1943, then *Kriegsmarine* commander-in-chief until the end of the war (and, briefly, President of Germany in succession to Hitler in May 1945).

US supply

The vast US economy, hauled from the Great Depression by the economic demands of global war, was now working at full tilt, equipping not only its own expanding armies, navies, and air fleets, but also those of Britain and the Soviet Union.

President Roosevelt had described the US as 'the arsenal of democracy'. It was also the arsenal of dictatorship, supplying the Soviet Union between March 1941 and October 1945 with 2,000 locomotives, 11,000 rail wagons, 540,000 tons of rails, 51,000 jeeps, 375,000 trucks, three million tons of petrol, and 15 million pairs of boots. The Red Army marched to Berlin in American boots and was fed on rations delivered in US trucks and trains.

Only marginally less important were the 15,000 aircraft, 7,000 tanks, and 350,000 tons of explosive also supplied to the Soviet Union. All of this was additional, of course, to both the supplies intended for the British, which included 7,000 aircraft and 5,000 tanks, and the vast mechanised forces and military manpower that formed the US build-up for its own strategic bombing campaign, and for its succession of landings in Africa, Italy, and France from late 1942 onwards.

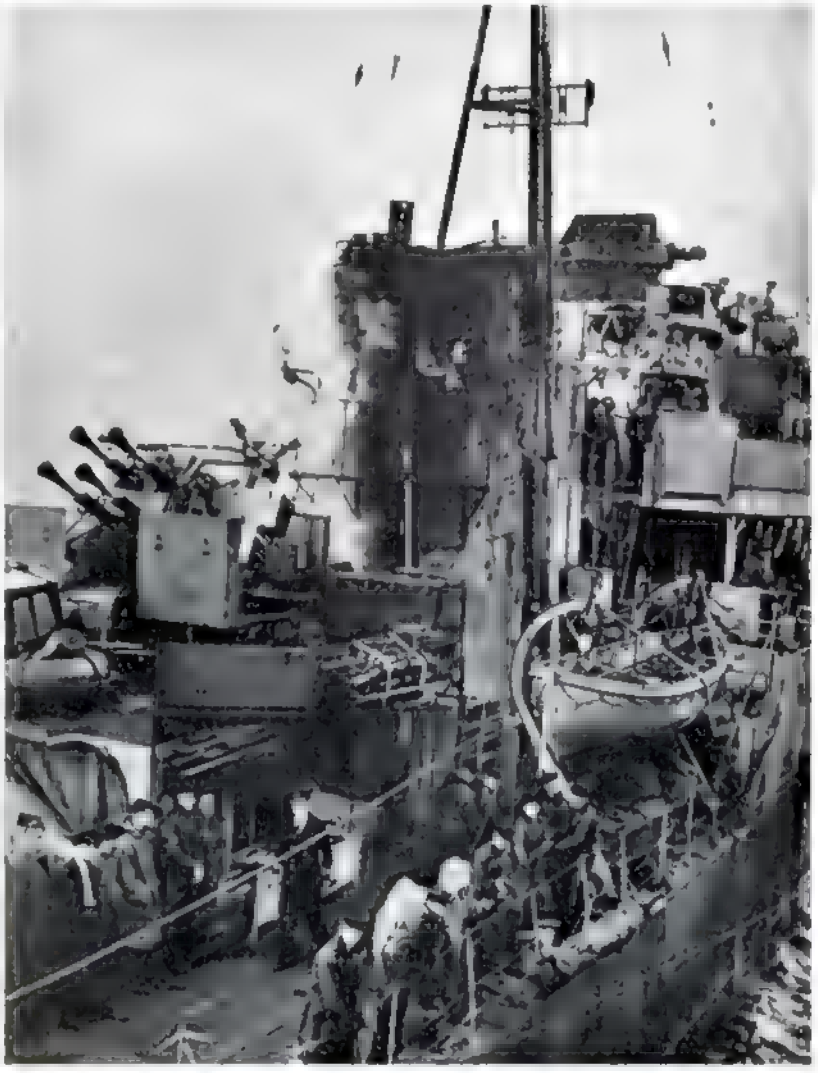
All of it – the supplies to keep Russia fighting, to keep Britain in the war, to sustain the island as a military platform for offensive operations, and to enable the build-up of force necessary to break into Occupied Europe – all of this was imperilled by the 250 U-boats of Admiral Karl Dönitz's command.

The Channel nightmare

This had always been the greatest nightmare of British statesmen: a continental hegemon in control of the Atlantic ports and able to challenge British maritime supremacy and threaten the home island with starvation. It was the nightmare of 1588, of 1704, and of 1805. It was the great fear that had brought Britain into war 'in defence of Belgium' in 1914. It was the reason Britain had stood foursquare with France in 1939, and it was the reason Britain had fought on alone after June 1940. This – now materialised in the form of submarine-launched torpedoes in the silence and darkness of mid-Atlantic nights – was the ultimate threat.

It had not been immediately clear which of Germany's various sea-war weapons would prove more deadly. As a weaker naval power, just as in the First World War, Germany operated a maritime guerrilla strategy, avoiding contact with large formations of British capital ships, and attempting to strangle British trade with a mix of surface raiders, mine-layers, torpedo-boats, aerial bombers, and submarines.

The surface raiders – battleships, battle-cruisers, pocket battleships, and cruisers – were too few in number and too vulnerable to interception and destruction to be decisive. Mine-laying was subject to effective counter-measures. The torpedo-boats were too vulnerable. Aerial bombing inflicted



Right The British destroyer HMS *Onslow* returns to port with damage after a clash with U-boats on escort duty.

Above Coastal Command Wrens load a camera onto a reconnaissance aircraft.
Right A torpedo-armed Bristol Beaufighter of RAF Coastal Command. There were too few of them, and their range was too limited: Coastal Command needed large numbers of long-range aircraft to fight the wolf-packs.

more than a million tons of merchant shipping loss in 1941, but the U-boats claimed twice as much, even with only a fraction of the strength Dönitz was to deploy in late 1942 and early 1943.

Dönitz began the war with 57 U-boats under command, 30 of them short-range coastal types, only 27 ocean-going. He claimed that he needed 300 vessels, capable of destroying 800,000 tons of Allied shipping a month, to end the war by starving Britain into submission. This estimate was surprisingly accurate, since the Battle of the Atlantic went critical as German U-boat strength and Allied shipping losses approached this level.

The wolf-packs

Despite increasingly effective anti-submarine technology and tactics, British kills fell below German production levels through 1942, such that Dönitz's ocean-going submarine fleet rose from 91 in January 1942 to 196 in October and a peak of 240 in April the following year.

So the 'wolf-packs' were growing steadily stronger. This tactical innovation was Dönitz's response to First World War experience and two particular challenges confronting successful submarine action. Single submarines might easily miss a convoy in the vastness of the ocean. A pack could form a chain on the surface and keep a wide band of ocean under observation. Single submarines were also vulnerable to convoy-protection measures. But a pack, rapidly concentrated by radio signal once a target had been identified, could swamp the defences. This was the fate of convoys SC-122 and HX 229 in mid-March 1943.

The Allies had survived thus far mainly through mass production of replacement ships and careful re-routing of convoys in line with information supplied by the Bletchley Park cryptographers. U-boat patrol lines and the vectoring of wolf-packs could often be detected, even though it was not until December 1942 that the 'Shark' codes used by the U-boat service were broken.

Still, the losses were severe and rising, and only the productive power of the US economy kept the shipping lanes open. Of particular importance was the development of a standardised tanker (the T10 of 14,000 tons) and the Liberty ship (of 10,000 tons), both of which were larger, faster, and quicker to build than their pre-war equivalents. Though they were shoddier in construction and prone to break up, it was quantity not quality that mattered.

Hunter-killers

The campaign had see-sawed for three years between U-boat 'happy times' and periods of heightened Allied success. When it tipped again in late 1942, in favour of the U-boats, partly because of their rising numbers, partly because of the position-finding and decrypting ▷

> The only thing that really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.
>
> *Winston Churchill*

1 Hydroplane guard
2 Forward end of pressure hull
3 Forward port hydroplane
4 Four torpedo tubes
5 Two torpedo reloads on deck
6 Torpedo reload stowed in watertight case
7 Bunks
8 Two torpedo reloads stowed below deck
9 Forward jumping wire
10 Forward torpedo-loading hatch
11 Forward torpedo room and crew's quarters
12 Petty officers' room
13 Pressure hull
14 Ward room
15 4.1 inch quick-firing gun
16 Batteries
17 Wireless room (starboard side)
18 Captain's cabin

19 Ballast tanks
20 The kiosk
21 Cruising periscope bridge (periscope lowered)
22 Attack periscope (lowered)
23 Control room
24 Anti-aircraft gun
25 Engine room artificers' quarters
27 Escape hatch
28 Galley
29 Aft jumping wires
30 Superstructure
31 Diesel surface motors
32 Oil tanks
33 Deck hatch
34 Aft torpedo-loading hatch
35 Port underwater electric-propulsion motor
36 Compressors
37 Torpedo reload stowed in watertight case
38 Tanks
39 Trimming tank
40 Exhaust

Above Three stages in the destruction of a U-boat, depth-charged by a US Liberator long-range bomber.

successes of the German equivalent of Ultra known as B-Dienst, the campaign came to its climax. Allied shipping losses looked set to exceed replacement rates.

In fact, the impression of imminent German victory was illusory. Allied countermeasures were on the brink of achieving a combined critical mass. It had been a long time coming, but finally the build-up in aircraft, escort vessels, doctrine, training, and weapons technology was poised to overwhelm the U-boats.

Among the essential elements were the integrated air-sea Western Approaches Command created by Sir Percy Noble at Liverpool, a sharp increase in the number of escort vessels available to defend each convoy, and the organisation of escort groups. The latter were groups of eight escort vessels that worked together over long periods. Increasingly, as techniques and tactics developed, they became more proactive and aggressive in response to U-boat attacks.

Under Noble's successor, Sir Max Horton, some of the escort groups became veritable 'hunter-killers'. With more frigates and destroyers, ships with the speed to catch the U-boats and the firepower to sink them, it was possible to reduce the emphasis on close-escort and encourage associated 'support groups' to go after their prey.

Air-power

Lack of aircraft for Coastal Command was a running sore in relations between the Royal Navy and the RAF. 'Since the outbreak of the war,' reports John Keegan, 'the Admiralty and the Royal Air Force had been locked in a quarrel over the development of long-range aircraft, the Admiralty rightly but vainly arguing that convoy protection produced a better return on effort than spectacular but often ineffective offensive bombing of German cities.'

Coastal Command estimated its needs as approximately 800 aircraft, and particularly stressed the need for long-range reconnaissance planes and bombers. The value of these was that they provided reconnaissance for convoys and forced enemy U-boats to submerge, cutting their speed to a fraction and curtailing their ability to identify, reach, and attack their targets.

But in early 1942 all Coastal Command's bombers were transferred to Bomber Command, and all of the new Lancasters, long-range heavy bombers, coming off the production lines went the same way. Britain almost lost the Battle of the Atlantic because she was waging an unwinnable strategic bombing offensive.

By early 1943, however, the build-up of strength in the Atlantic was sufficient to turn the tide. Bletchley was consistently breaking the U-boat codes and making it ever more possible both to re-route convoys and to track down the wolf-packs. Plentiful escort ships allowed the creation of five permanent 'support groups'. Twenty anti-submarine aircraft were carried in two escort-carriers, and these supplemented the growing numbers of shore-based, long-range aircraft, notably the new US Liberator bomber. Equipped with radar, Leigh Light, machine-guns, and depth-charges, the Liberator was a deadly bird of prey for any U-boat caught on or close to the surface.

Britain almost lost the Battle of the Atlantic because she was waging an unwinnable strategic bombing offensive.

Hedgehog and Squid

Escort vessels were now equipped with both radar and Asdic (sonar) for submarine detection, and with both Hedgehog and Squid depth-charge launchers. These instruments and weapons were designed to be used in combination, such that the detectors could continue operating despite exploding depth-charges, and such that the charges would be dropped and explode across a wide area and at variable depths, maximising the chances of a kill.

Dönitz, scenting victory, ordered an all-out U-boat offensive. But in May 1943, under the weight of Allied surveillance, co-ordination, and firepower, U-boat losses hit 43, twice the replacement rate and wholly unsustainable. On 24 May the U-boat commander conceded defeat and withdrew his battered wolf-packs. He later wrote in his memoirs: 'We had lost the Battle of the Atlantic.'

Between September 1939 and May 1943, the *Kriegsmarine* lost almost 700 out of 830 U-boats sent on operations, the great majority of them in the Atlantic, and 26,000 killed out of 41,000 crewmen who served in them. Including a further 5,000 taken prisoner, the casualty rate for U-boat crews was 75%.

On the other hand, from Germany's point of view, the campaign represents an astonishing exercise in the principle 'economy of force'. The Allies lost 2,450 merchant ships in the Atlantic up to May 1943, totalling 13 million tons, along with 175 warships. They were compelled to dedicate a huge proportion of their war production to the Battle of the Atlantic, and further war production to make good the losses sustained when loaded merchantmen went down. No precise calculations are possible, but there can be little doubt that the cost exceeded manifold that expended by Germany on her U-boat fleet.

Not least, whereas Germany starved in the First World War – with an estimated 750,000 German civilians lost to hunger by November 1918 – it was Britain that lived close to the edge during the Second World War. While there was strict rationing in Britain, German civilians ate well until late in the war, and, whatever other terrible fates befell many of them, very few were ever hungry.

COMING NEXT

GRAND STRATEGY 1943

THE SECOND FRONT

By mid 1943 the Soviet Union had borne the main brunt of the Nazi drive to dominate Europe for two years. Millions of Russians were dead. Yet still the British refused to invade northern Europe, instead leapfrogging to Sicily. In the last of his short series, Neil Faulkner explores the controversy around the Second Front.

Cordoba, 1936

Three Loyalist militiamen aim their rifles over a gully on the Cordoba front in early September 1936. The first conflict Capa was to cover was the Spanish Civil War. Determined to use his camera to gain support for the Spanish Republic, he joined a group of journalists in Barcelona to work on a special issue of the French publication *Vu*, which was covering the war.

ROBERT CAPA

1913-1954

On 22 October 2013 it will be 100 years since the birth of a man who set the standard by which war photographers worldwide would come to be judged. With no initial intention of becoming a photographer of any kind, yet named the greatest war photographer of all time by *Picture Post* in 1938, Robert Capa covered five wars between 1936 and 1954, before being killed by a landmine during the First Indochina War on 25 May 1954.

Capa never glorified war, instead choosing to present human faces scarred by the effects of conflict. Close-up and personal, his photographs almost invariably showed emotions etched into the expressions of those touched by war, rather than blasted landscapes or compositionally stunning images of objects. He placed himself right in the thick of the action, landing with the second wave of Allied troops on Omaha Beach during the D-Day Landings, and immersing himself in any battle he was sent to cover. He famously said of photography that, 'If your photos aren't good enough, you aren't close enough.' Despite this, he never took risks unnecessarily, and was not as reckless as his posthumous reputation claimed.

To mark the centenary of his birth, *MHM* looks at a selection of Robert Capa's work, from images showcasing his hands-on approach to the Spanish Civil War offensives, to the sensitive portrayals of his companion and lover, Gerda Taro

Paris, 1935

A portrait of Robert Capa taken in Paris in the autumn of 1935. As a teenager Capa hoped to become a reporter, a career which he believed would enable him to combine his loves of politics and literature.

Cordoba, 1936

With him in Spain was his girlfriend and fellow photographer Gerda Taro. Pictured here on the Cordoba front in September 1936, Taro was taught the rudiments of photography by Capa, who was said never to have fully recovered from her tragic death during the Battle of Brunete on 25 July 1937.

Hankow, 1938

In 1938 Capa travelled to the Chinese city of Hankow, now called Wuhan, to document the resistance to the Japanese invasion. On 12 March 1938 he photographed the parade to commemorate Sun Yat-Sen's death and celebrate a victory at the front. This portrait of a 15-year-old Chinese Nationalist boy soldier became the first of Capa's two *Life* magazine covers.

A resistance fighter in the recently liberated French town of Chartres in June/July 1944. At the start of the war, Capa was living in New York, having fled Paris during the Nazi occupation. He returned to France in 1944, however, following General Leclerc's French 2nd Armoured Division push into Paris.

Bastogne, 1944

In the Bastogne region of the Ardennes, Capa captured the scene of German soldiers being taken prisoner by American forces on 23-26 December 1944.

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The Black Prince

AT POITIERS

Less well-known but equally brilliant, the Black Prince's 1356 victory at Poitiers stands comparison with Crécy and Agincourt. Author **Peter Hoskins** analyses the campaign.

Late on Monday 19 September 1356, in the fields five miles south-east of Poitiers, Denis de Morbek, an exiled French knight in the army of the Black Prince, accepted the surrender of King John II of France. The 26-year-old Black Prince, eldest son of King Edward III of England, had led his heavily outnumbered army to a victory that, with the capture of King John, would bring France to the brink of collapse. The prince's triumph, the culmination of a campaign that had started 12 months earlier with a landing at Bordeaux, marked the pinnacle of his career and was one of the most important English victories of the Hundred Years War.

The Black Prince's army was in the service of the English Crown and we speak of it as 'the English'. In reality, it was half Gascon (or French in modern terms), and there were also Welsh archers and spearmen in its ranks, as well as some soldiers of fortune from elsewhere in Europe.

Above French cavalry charge English archers at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. In fact, most of the French attacked on foot, given the strong English defensive position, but in other respects this Late Medieval illustration gives a fair impression of the general character of the battle.

England in the mid 14th century was not a modern nation-state, and provided the King could carry his great barons and Parliament with him, policy was driven by the sovereign's dynastic ambitions. The Hundred Years War was essentially an attempt by English kings to hold onto hereditary territories in France and to

Images: © WIPL Maps: © Peter Hoskins

Above An illuminated manuscript illustration showing Edward III (left) bestowing Aquitaine on his son, Edward, the Black Prince (right). **Below right** Drawing of the tomb effigy of the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral.

pursue their claim to the French throne. Whether any real 'national' interest was at stake is an altogether different matter.

The Languedoc in 1355

A truce between England and France was due to expire in the summer of 1355, and the French were already making raids into English territory in Aquitaine. Pro-English Gascon nobles asked Edward III for military support and the leadership of the Black Prince to take the offensive against French forces in the south of France.

The King's council agreed, and during the summer 1,000 men-at-arms, 1,400 Welsh and English archers, and 170 Welsh spearmen mustered at Plymouth. The departure, planned for late July, was delayed by contrary winds and an initial shortage of ships, but the fleet finally sailed on 9 September for the one-week crossing to Bordeaux.

On 2 October the Prince's army, reinforced by Gascon men-at-arms and now 6,000 strong, headed south. His aims were to punish the Count of Armagnac, the French King's lieutenant in the south, who held lands adjacent to Aquitaine; to show support for Edward's Gascon subjects, and, if possible, to bring Armagnac to battle.

Consistent with the English tactics of the period, the Prince's army advanced on a wide front sometimes 25 miles or more across. Once in enemy territory, the army pillaged, burnt, and destroyed farms, villages, small towns, and mills, in part to secure spoils for the troops, but also as an instrument of economic warfare and to demonstrate the French King's powerlessness to defend his people.

The army reached Narbonne on the Mediterranean coast and then returned to Aquitaine by early December. The Prince's operations had delivered a serious blow to King John's ability to wage war the following year, with the towns and cities of the south retaining taxes and men for their own defence rather than contributing to John's army in the north.

The summer of 1356

Edward III's plan for 1356 was for a three-pronged attack on France, the King striking from Calais, the Duke of Lancaster from Brittany, and the Black Prince from Aquitaine; the plan was to rendezvous in the centre of France. In Bordeaux, the Prince's preparations for the coming campaign included the recruitment of 600 more archers, mainly from Cheshire, and restocking with bows, arrows, and bowstrings.

In June, Lancaster landed in France with 2,400 men. The following month

Edward III ordered an army to assemble at Southampton, and the Prince mustered 10,000 men at Bergerac. On 4 August the Prince left Bergerac, leaving 4,000 troops to guard Aquitaine in his absence. His plan was to advance to Bourges to engage the army that the Count of Poitiers, King John's lieutenant for the Languedoc, was assembling. If all went to plan, he would then rendezvous with his father and Lancaster.

A few days after the Prince left Bergerac, however, Aragonese galleys, allied to the French, appeared in the English Channel. Edward III remained in England to counter the threat, leaving the Prince to shoulder the greater part of the burden of the coming campaign.

On 14 August the Black Prince crossed the Vienne. Initially there had been little hostile action, but now, ten days after leaving Bergerac, the tactics changed: banners were deployed to show hostile intent, towns and castles were taken and destroyed, and the countryside was pillaged. The Prince had a clear view, however, of his primary objective: to bring the French to battle. He could not expect reinforcements and he was determined not to squander men on operations of secondary importance. Well-defended places were therefore spared assault.

First clashes

As the Prince advanced, the Count of Poitiers redeployed his army to guard the crossings of the Loire. There was now no point in going to Bourges as initially planned, and the army changed direction, advancing directly towards the Loire and King John, who was beyond the river at Chartres.

Meanwhile, John had sent two scouting parties to find the Black Prince, and there were several engagements between the French scouts and men from the Prince's army. The English had the best of the encounters, and obtained valuable intelligence on French movements and intentions from prisoners.

Remnants of the scouting parties took refuge in Romorantin castle on 29 August. The Prince decided to take the well-defended castle, a break with the tactics to date, because he believed that King John was approaching and that he might draw John into an attempt to relieve the castle. In fact, although John was keen to bring the Black Prince to battle, he was still well to the north when the castle surrendered on 3 September.

The Black Prince still hoped to join forces with Lancaster, but he knew that the bridges across the Loire had either been demolished or were in French hands. Furthermore, the summer of 1356 was unusually wet, and fording the Loire might prove impractical. Nevertheless, he was not yet ready to abandon the plan to meet Lancaster, and on 5 September he left Romorantin and moved towards the Loire, arriving at Montlouis-sur-Loire two days later. He remained here for three days, while the French moved towards Amboise further upstream.

Manoeuvre

The Black Prince wanted to bring the French army to battle, but only in favourable circumstances. If he remained at Montlouis-sur-Loire, he risked being trapped in the funnel between the rivers Loire and Cher. Unable to cross the ▷

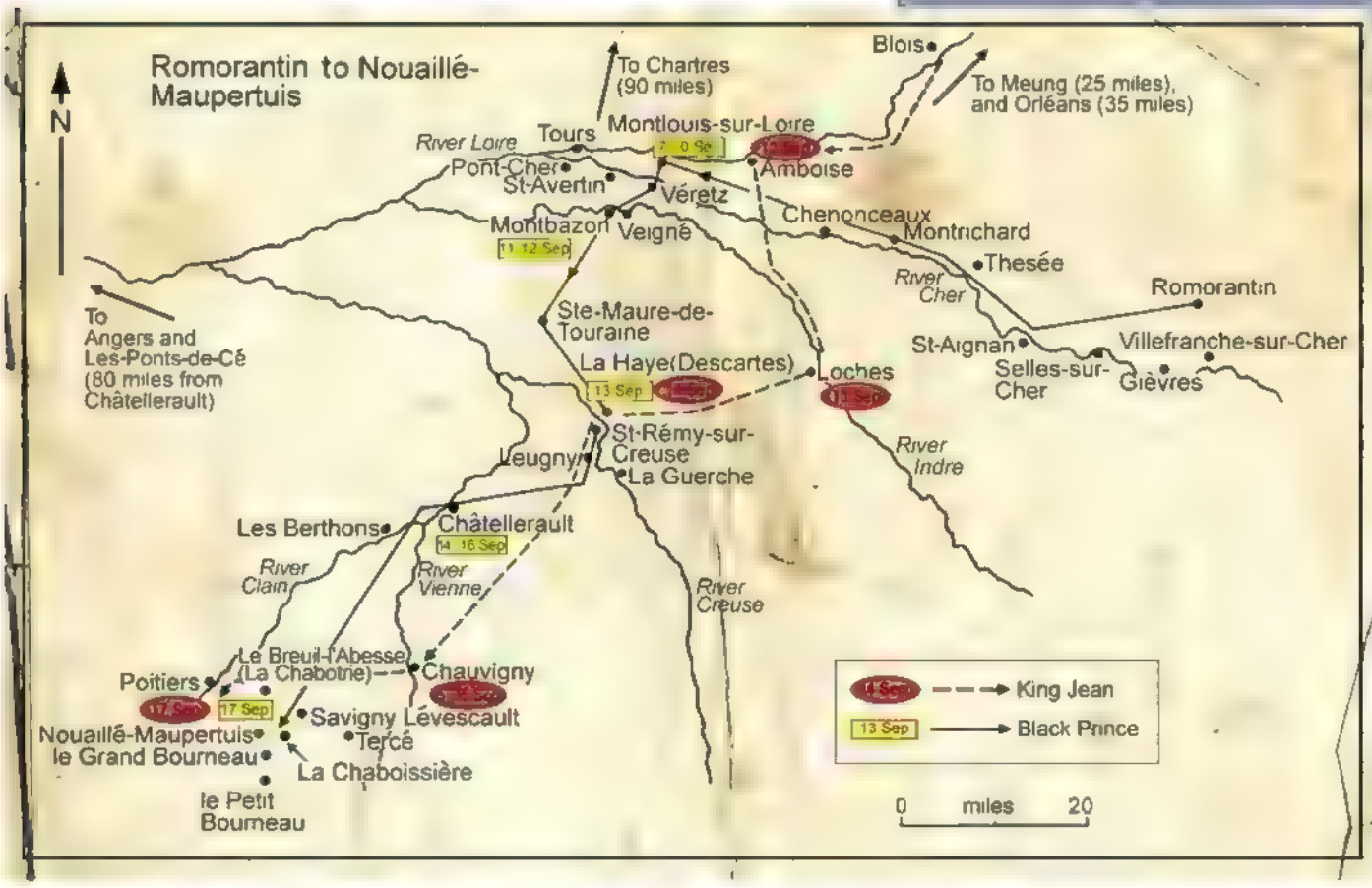
Left Map of the Poitiers campaign showing the movements of the Black Prince's army in relation to those of the Duke of Lancaster, the Count of Poitiers, and King John. The campaign was shaped by the failure of the English grand plan for a rendezvous of three armies in central France, and then by the Duke of Lancaster's failure to effect a junction with the Black Prince.

Loire, he had no choice but to turn south for Bordeaux before John closed the trap.

On 11 September he crossed the Cher and then the Indre (to avoid a second trap between the Cher and the Indre). He paused at Montbazon for a day while John crossed the Loire at Amboise. While there, he received the Cardinal of Périgord, who was attempting to negotiate a truce. The Prince rebuffed the Cardinal, but he learnt from him that the Dauphin was now at Tours and that John was planning to do battle with the English.

On 13 September the Prince moved 25 miles across country to La Haye (now Descartes). Meanwhile, the French army moved south, parallel to the Prince, to

Below Map of central France showing the marches of the English and French armies in the final days before the battle.



Above This contemporary illustration gives some impression of the character of the armies that clashed at Poitiers. Each comprised three or four divisions formed of men-at-arms, who might fight mounted or on foot, and variable numbers of supporting archers. The French tended to field large masses of heavily armoured men-at-arms, and these fought mainly on foot at Poitiers because of the vulnerability of horses to the English arrow-storm. The English way of war was to combine the action of archers and dismounted men-at-arms in strong defensive lines.

Loches. The armies were now only 20 miles apart.

The Prince moved to Châtellerault on 14 September and remained there for three days, still with the hope of joining Lancaster. The French continued to move south, and John passed through Descartes the day after the Prince, arriving at Chauvigny on 15 September.

Meanwhile Lancaster, having failed to cross the Loire at Les-Ponts-de-Cé 75 miles to the north-west of the Prince, started to withdraw. The Prince was unaware of this development, but he knew that John was now ahead of him. On Friday 16 September he heard that John was going to march west from Chauvigny to Poitiers the following day to join further French troops

Interception of the French rearguard

The Prince decided not to wait for news of Lancaster, but instead to intercept the French. He ordered the baggage train to cross the Vienne on the Friday night to avoid impeding the combat elements the next morning. On Saturday he left Châtellerault to catch the French on the march

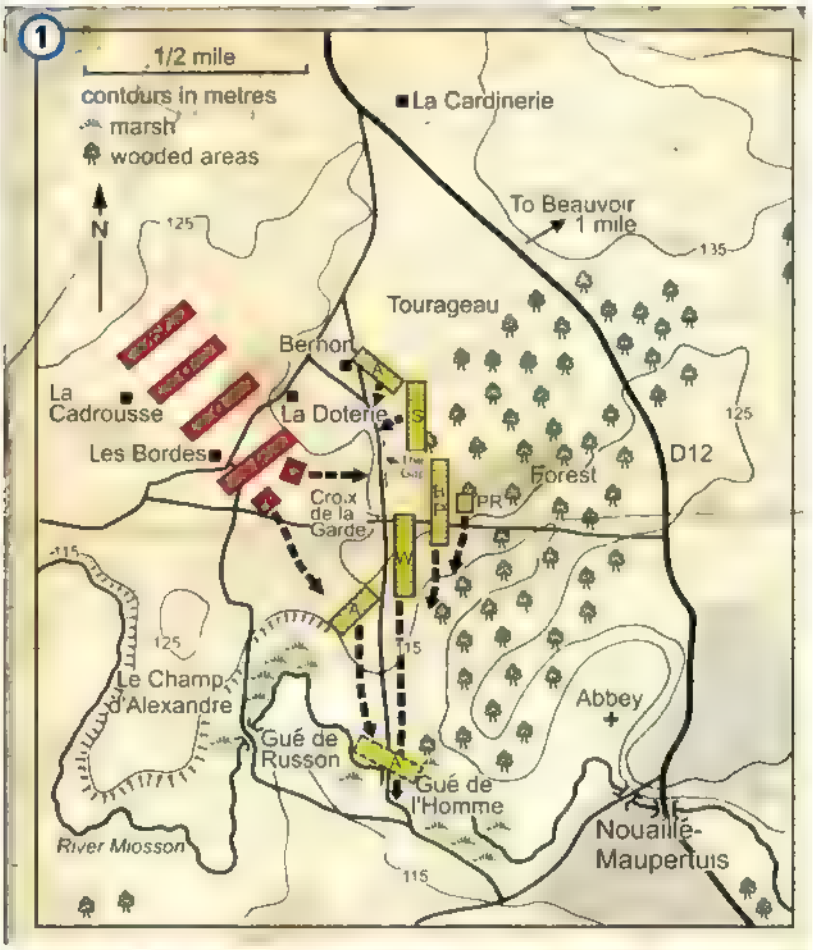
By the time the Prince's men reached the road between Chauvigny and Poitiers, most of the French had passed, but a little to the south of the road, probably near Savigny-Lévescault ten miles west of Chauvigny, a detachment of 200 men-at-arms fell on the French rearguard.

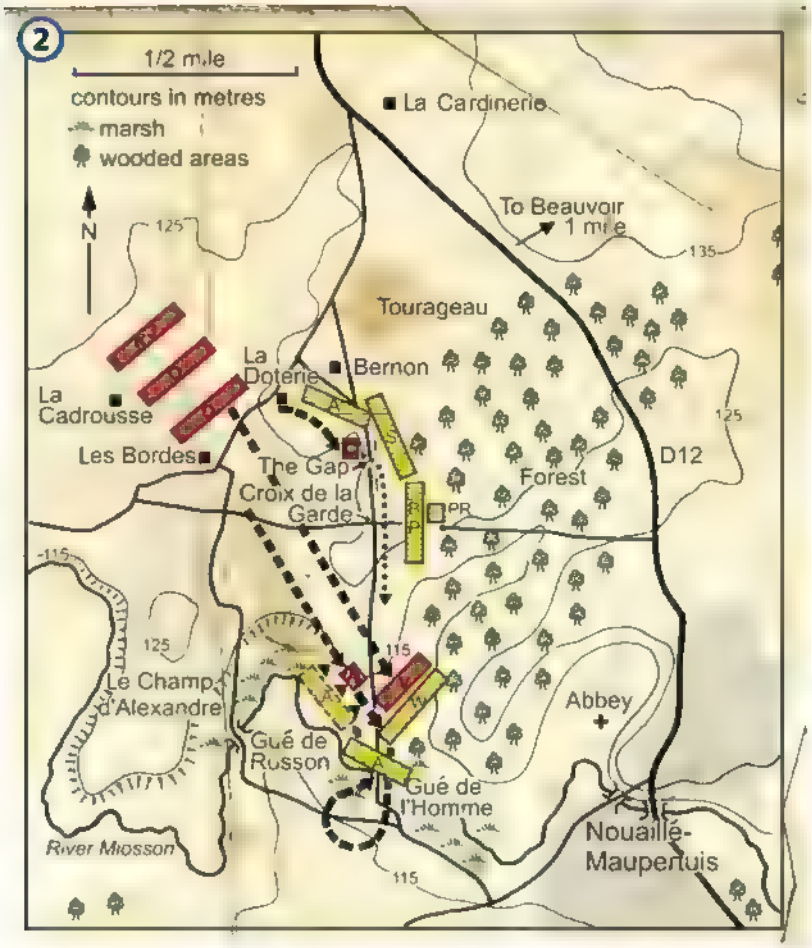
> Those on foot were ordered to remove spurs and to shorten lances to make them easier to handle.

The French were taken by surprise, and 240 men-at-arms and knights were killed or captured. Some of the Prince's men pursued the routed French, but the Prince held back the bulk of the army in case of a counter-attack. He then camped for the night to gather together the baggage train and those who had set off in pursuit of the French. To the south-east of Poitiers, between the Prince and the city, the French also encamped.

Eve of battle

Sunday was likely to be free of fighting under the doctrine of the Truce of God, which was intended to prevent fighting on holy days, but the Prince could not be ▷





certain of this and needed to be ready for battle. Saturday's bivouac had suffered from a shortage of water and the first priority on Sunday was to find water for men and horses, probably from the Miosson near Nouaillé. Another priority was food, which was also in short supply.

Having fed and watered the army as best he could, the Prince turned and marched towards the French to take up position. The precise location of the battlefield is open to debate. The interpretation offered here seems to fit best with contemporary accounts.

The English army, about 4,000 men-at-arms and 2,000 archers, deployed in three divisions along the axis of the road that runs north from the old ford across the Miosson, the Gué de l'Homme, now crossed by a bridge. The Black Prince commanded the centre, probably near the crossroads at the Croix de la Garde, with the vanguard commanded by the Earl of Warwick to his left, and the rearguard to his right under the command of the Earl of Salisbury. The archers were divided equally between Warwick and Salisbury. Behind the Prince a small contingent of 400 men-at-arms waited in reserve.

The French were probably a few hundred yards to the west, near the hamlet of Les Bordes. Estimates vary

1. Plan of the Battle of Poitiers at break of day
The English withdrawal and the first French attack.

2. Plan of the Battle of Poitiers early morning
The English turn to face the French attack and hurl it back.

3. Plan of the Battle of Poitiers mid-morning
The main French attack on the English line.

4. Plan of Battle of Poitiers midday
The final French attack by the King's division.

Key
Anglo-Gascons
- BP Black Prince
- PR Black Prince's reserve
- S Salisbury's rearguard
- W Warwick's vanguard
- A Archers
- CB Captal de Buch

French
- D'Audrehem's cavalry
- Clermont's cavalry
- Vanguard
- The Dauphin's division
- Duke of Orléans division
- King Jean's division

for the size of the French army, but they were probably around two-and-a-half times more numerous than the English.

The battlefield

King John sent out scouts to reconnoitre the Black Prince's position on the Sunday morning. They reported that the English were in a very strong position and well prepared for battle. They described the position as being along a road well fortified with hedges and bushes, with just one gap, where only four men-at-arms could ride abreast. They also stated that the defence was well organised and the archers would not be easy to defeat. The hedges served as a natural rampart to protect the archers, and they – together with the gap, cut by carters to allow access to the fields – were important features of the battlefield.

The report of the scouts shaped French tactics. The Black Prince's deployment of his army on foot, in a strong defensive position that optimised the effect of the longbows, was typical for English armies of the period. These tactics were well known to the French and to Earl Douglas, serving King John with 200 Scots. John took counsel and decided that most of his army would also fight on foot, but 500 cavalry divided into two squadrons under the two Marshals of France, Clermont and d'Audrehem, would attack the archers.

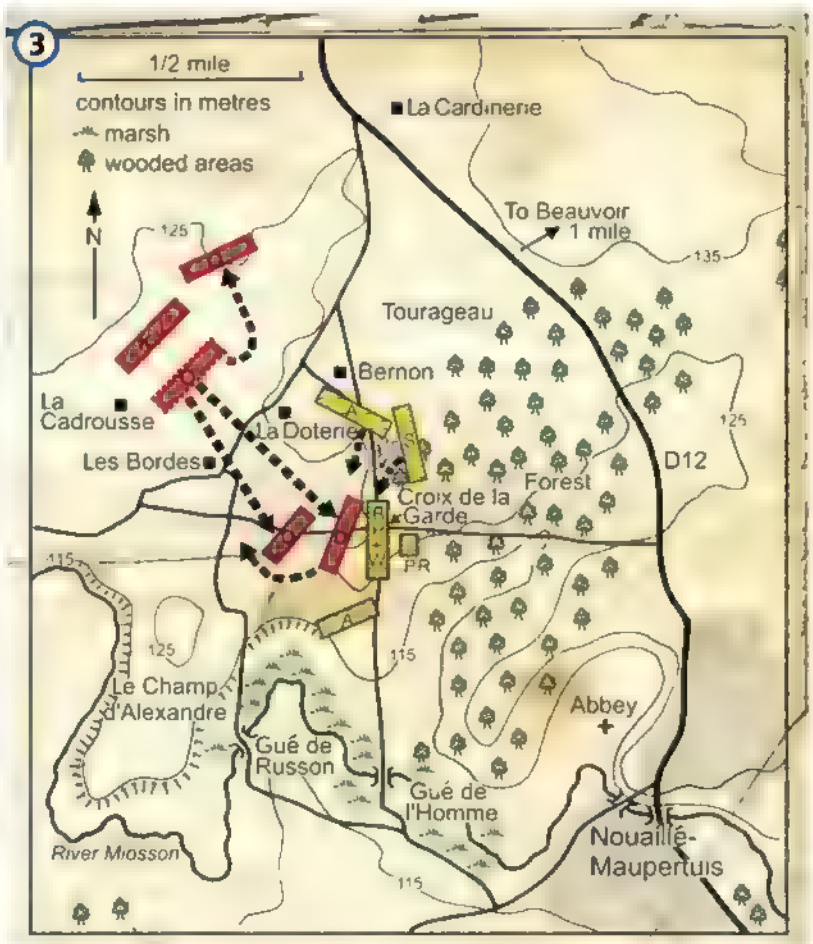
Those on foot were ordered to remove spurs and to shorten lances to make them easier to handle. The elements of the army on foot were divided into four divisions: the vanguard under the Duke of Athens, a second division under the Dauphin, a third commanded by the Duke of Orleans, and the fourth led by the King.

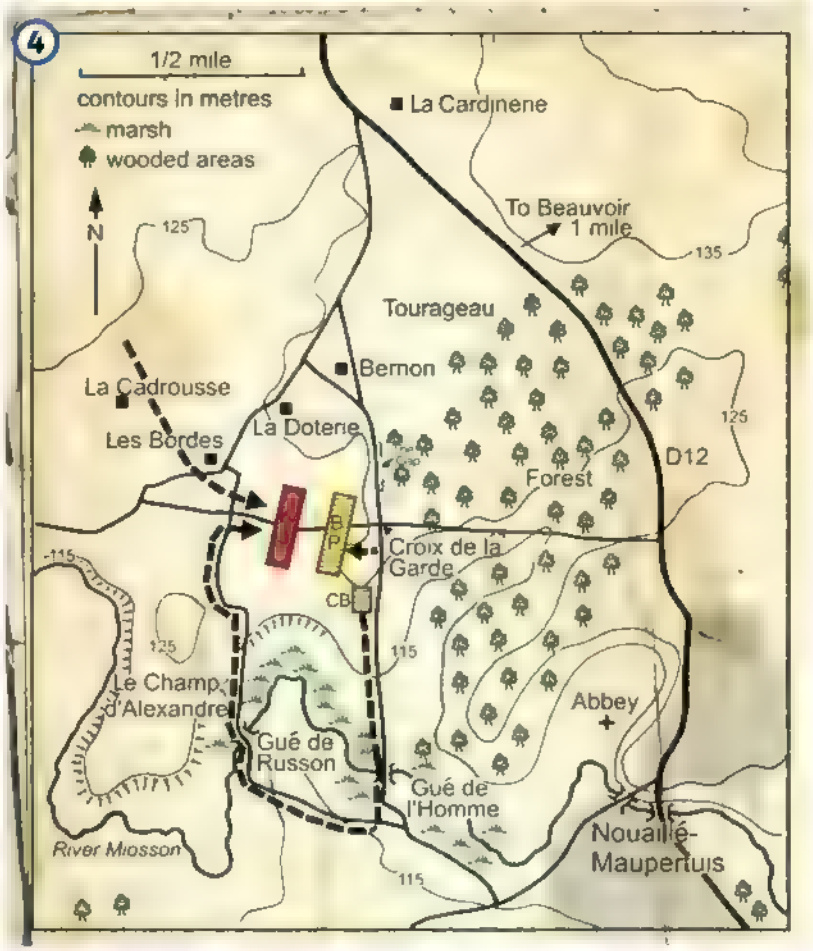
Much of Sunday, at the instigation of the Cardinal of Périgord, was spent in truce negotiations between representatives of the Prince and the King. Some of the King's advisors had urged him to come to terms with the Prince, but with the majority taking the contrary view, John finally rejected the terms on offer and demanded the Prince's surrender.

The Prince said that he would rather risk death than live in shame. He rebuffed both the demand for surrender and an offer of an extended truce provided that he undertook not to move off under cover of night, saying that he would stay or go at his own pleasure.

BATTLE: the attack of the French vanguard

At dawn on Monday morning, around 5.40am, the two armies were arrayed for battle. As the minutes ticked away, ▷





Above King John surrenders at the end of the Battle of Poitiers.

the Prince's position became weaker, because of a shortage of provisions and the growing strength of the French army as further men arrived. This possibility had been anticipated and plans had been made for that most difficult of military manoeuvres: disengagement in contact with the enemy.

At about 7.30am, when there was no movement by the French, the Prince ordered the army to move off: Warwick led, followed by the Black Prince, and finally Salisbury. The lie of the land shielded Warwick's vanguard from view, and it is likely his men were already crossing the Miosson before the French realised what was afoot. The first sign for them was the movement of the Prince's banner.

The cavalry squadrons set off at once, Clermont on the French left heading for the gap in the hedge, and d'Audrehem making for the ford over the Miosson in an attempt to cut off the withdrawal. The remainder of the vanguard, on foot, also set off, but instead of a co-ordinated attack by the cavalry and the vanguard, a series of piecemeal engagements took place.

Salisbury realised what was happening and moved his men forward, with the archers, protected by the hedge, shooting into Clermont's cavalry. Shortly thereafter d'Audrehem's squadron made contact with Warwick's men and his archers, who had been deployed to protect the river crossing. D'Audrehem's horses were well armoured at the front, and the archers moved forward into a marsh to enable them to fire into the flanks of the horses.

Those of Warwick's men who had crossed the river were now returning to join the rest of the army, and men of the other divisions dismounted and took up position. When the foot elements of the French vanguard came into contact, they were driven back. King John had already lost three key commanders: Clermont and the Duke of Athens killed and d'Audrehem captured. In addition, Earl Douglas and the Scots left the field, possibly in fear of their treatment if captured, since they were subject to a truce between England and Scotland.

BATTLE: the main struggle

Following the withdrawal of the remnants of the vanguard, the Dauphin's division advanced to join the fight. This phase of the battle, which lasted two hours, was hard-fought. The French were not broken, but they were eventually beaten off, retiring in good order, though the Dauphin's banner-bearer was captured.

The exhausted English took advantage of the pause that followed to move the wounded to shelter under trees and bushes, to replace broken weapons with those of the fallen, and to recover arrows, including pulling them from the dead and wounded. Importantly, the Prince's men remained disciplined and did not pursue either the vanguard or the Dauphin's division. The English line remained firm.

Much of the division of the Duke of Orléans now left the field in the direction of Chauvigny, taking with them all of the King's sons save the youngest, Philip, the future Duke of Burgundy, who remained with his father to the last. The attack by what remained of the division was half hearted and soon driven off. To many in the Prince's army it seemed that the battle was over, since it was common practice for Medieval armies to fight in three divisions.

BATTLE: the final attack

John, however, had kept his own division in reserve, and the Prince's men watched with fear and consternation as this division, reinforced by those who had rallied to the King from the other divisions, advanced with the Oriflamme banner flying as a signal that no prisoners would be taken.

The Black Prince's army had no reserves to call on. His men were exhausted and morale was close to collapse at the prospect of yet more fighting. The Prince seized the initiative, taking two decisive steps. First, he despatched the Gascon Captal de Buch with 60 men-at-arms and 100 archers to move round behind the French. Second, possibly in part to stiffen the resolve of his men as they saw the Captal apparently leaving the field, he called 'Advance, advance banners!' and charged King John's advancing men.

The battle was now renewed with an exchange of fire between French crossbowmen and the English archers, but the already depleted supplies of arrows were soon exhausted and the archers joined the hand-to-hand fighting with anything that came within reach. At this point the appearance of the Captal de Buch behind the French, with his archers firing into the less well protected sides and rear of the men-at-arms, was the decisive stroke, and many of the French now fled. To all intents and purposes the battle was over, with the English pursuing the French towards Poitiers, where many lost their lives outside the closed gates.

The French losses were reported as 2,500 nobles and men-at-arms killed, and 2,000 taken prisoner. In addition, 500 dismissed as 'common folk' were captured and 3,300 slain. Casualties among the Prince's men were said to amount to the improbably low figure of 60 killed.

The Black Prince had delivered to his father a great victory, and the opportunity for peace on Edward III's terms. In 1360 the Treaty of Brétigny, which ceded large tracts of French territory to the English, seemed to have secured that peace. But within a few years a new French king, Charles V, who had fought at Poitiers as the Dauphin, would be driving the English out of their new lands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Hoskins is the author of *In the Steps of the Black Prince- the road to Poitiers, 1355-1356*, Boydell Press, £16.99.

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Tripoli Trappola

PART 2: ITALY'S HOLLOW CONQUEST

Julian Spilsbury concludes his account of the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912 – part of Italy's johnny-come-lately campaign to build an African empire.

By December 1911, having successfully defended Tripoli against fierce Arab counterattacks, the Italian invaders were ready to go onto the offensive. Their initial target was the Ottoman headquarters at Ain Zara. The attack was launched on 4 December.

The Italian plan was for a brigade under General Rainaldi to advance directly on Ain Zara while a much stronger force, two brigades under General Pecori-Giraldi, marched through the desert to outflank and envelop the left of the Ottoman positions.

Italian intelligence reported that the Turks were strongly entrenched at Ain Zara. It was hoped that they might make a stand and that, if Pecori's turning manoeuvre was successful, the entire Ottoman force in Tripolitania might be destroyed or captured.

Supported by heavy artillery from the Italian trench lines, and by the long-range fire of two battleships, Rainaldi's brigade advanced directly on Ain Zara. But it was soon forced to halt. Over to its right, Pecori's division had come into contact with Arabs in the sand dunes.

From a knoll to the rear of Rainaldi's brigade, W K McClure, correspondent for *The Times*, watched as Pecori shelled

Above Libyan irregulars in 1912. The Ottomans mobilised the Arab and Berber tribes in an effective *jihad* against the Italian invaders. The war became an asymmetrical struggle between a conventional army largely tied to the coast, and a mix of mobile regulars and native irregulars operating in the hinterland.

Photos: © Alamy and WPL

> The guns poured shrapnel onto the enemy, and at intervals the big guns from the trenches roared deafeningly.
>
> **W K McClure,** Times correspondent, Battle of Ain Zara, *December 1911*

the enemy out of their positions. 'In a few minutes the air was full of little bursting clouds that hung low above the sand hills, then blew away. The infantry lay down and waited, the guns poured shrapnel onto the enemy, and at intervals the big guns from the trenches roared deafeningly. The mountain guns under Colonel Besozzi were making beautiful practice, but the right wing was still being held up. The short day was half over, and the turning movement was far from being as well advanced as it ought to have been.' Worse still, it was raining heavily.

Aeroplane and airship

As the advance began again, an officer of Bersaglieri recalled: 'As we advance a buzz of admiration rises from the men, who point out something to one another in the sky. It is Captain Moizo's aeroplane flying on the storm against the lurid background of the great clouds which the wind whirls and twists.. There is something quivering at the steering gear behind, which turns out to be the national flag

'After a few minutes we see him circling in great sweeping rings over a special point, like a hawk which has sighted its prey below. Five minutes more and we mark in the far distance, rising from the ground one after the other, in a straight line right ahead of us, eight towering black columns of smoke, like gigantic solitary trees sprung up by magic on the horizon. The master of the sky has sighted the enemy's trenches and bombarded them, vanishing shortly afterwards to Ain Zara.'

A little later, wrote the same officer, 'A dirigible [airship] appears over the battlefield and halts above the contending forces at a height of 1,500 yards. It is the F.3, commanded by Captain Denti. The officers in the car are making signals with a red flag, perhaps to correct the fire of the artillery and of the big guns of the battleships.'

Ain Zara

The resistance of the Arabs in the dunes gained the Turks precious hours. By the time – at 3.30pm – Rainaldi's brigade was breasting the ridge to the north-west of Ain Zara, and Pecori's Division was closing in from the south-west, the entire Turkish and Arab force was streaming away across the desert, covered by a rearguard of Arab riflemen.

The Italians made much of the capture of Ain Zara – in Tripoli seven captured Turkish guns were paraded, wreathed with palm branches in front of the Konak. The silence around the Italian defensive perimeter, after weeks of constant rifle-fire and intermittent Turkish shelling, proclaimed to the local population that Ottoman rule had ended.

Yet behind closed doors it was generally agreed that a great opportunity had been lost. Pecori had allowed himself to be delayed by comparatively weak forces and executed his turning manoeuvre too early. By concentrating on a geographical objective rather than the enemy's mass, the Italians had allowed the Ottoman forces in Tripolitania to escape.

The capture of Ain Zara was generally believed to be the prelude to an advance southwards towards the mountains, Jebel Tarhuna, and Jebel Gharian. Despite the amassing in Tripoli of camels from Tunis, however, and of motor vehicles and railway stores from Italy, activity was confined to land and air reconnaissance.

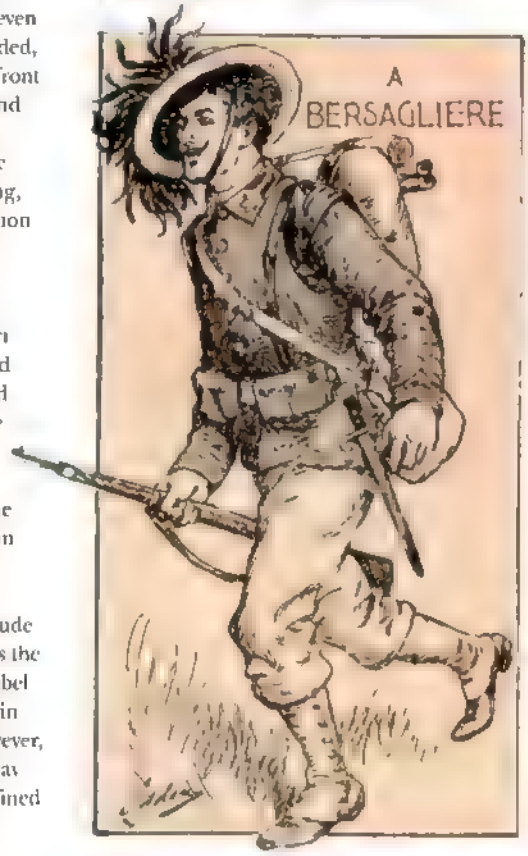
Bir Tobras

On 17 December a reconnaissance in force was sent out to the oasis of Bir Tobras eight miles south-east of Tripoli. Commanded by Colonel Fara, the force lost its way on the night approach-march, and after clearing the oasis of its small Arab garrison, soon found itself under heavy attack by large numbers of Arabs and Turkish regulars.

Short of ammunition – they had been equipped only with a day's supply – and with machine-guns jammed by desert sand, Fara withdrew to some sand dunes and formed a defensive square.

Repeated messages appealing for support sent to General Pecori at Ain Zara met with no response, and darkness found Fara's little force in desperate straits, with ammunition almost exhausted. Only a night-time extraction at 3am prevented their being overrun or shot down at leisure the following morning, and it was not until dawn that ▷

Below A contemporary drawing of a Bersagliere, a soldier of the Italian military élite, which played a major role in the Libyan campaign.



Above Turkish light artillery in action.

Fara's men, slogging north through sand dunes, met up with a relief force belatedly dispatched by Pecori.

The near-disaster at Bir Tobras – which resulted in Pecori's recall in early January – reinforced the Italian Government's view that no operations should be undertaken without strong numerical superiority over the enemy and minimal risk.

A strong force pushed out to Gargaresh – almost under the walls of Tripoli – in early January, was withdrawn within 24 hours after facing a series of attacks from Turks and Arabs; attacks which were at all points beaten off. Only when it was clear that the Turks had retired into the desert was Gargaresh reoccupied. There is some evidence that this timid policy adversely affected the morale of the troops, many of whom had fought well and hard in difficult circumstances.

Clinging to the coast

At the time of General Caneva's advance on Ain Zara, the Italians had had a grand total of 120,000 men at various locations along the Libyan coast – 70,000 at Tripoli, 25,000 at Benghazi, 15,000 at Derna, and 5,000 each at Homs and Tobruk. Yet nowhere was there any serious attempt to push inland. It was increasingly evident to the watching world that the Italians – who were hoping great-power intervention might give them everything they wanted without further fighting – were content merely to hang onto their coastal enclaves.

On the other hand, while their position at Tripoli offered the Italians opportunities for exploitation southwards as far as, and into, the mountains – opportunities which they declined – the situation in Cyrenaica was complicated by three factors. First, there was virtually no geographical feature inland that could render their coastal acquisitions secure. Second, the eastern tribes were even more unruly and warlike than those of the west. And third, command in the eastern vilayet fell to two very remarkable men.

> Rising from the ground one after the other were eight towering black columns of smoke.
>
> **Bersaglieri officer,** Battle of Ain Zara, *December 1911*

The Turkish officers who had made their way, with difficulty, to Libya at the outbreak of war included a number of men who, unlike most Italian officers, had seen action before – in Yemen, Crete, or the Balkans. One of them, Enur Suleiman, a Hungarian, had commanded a body of Arabs against the British at Omdurman. Chief among them, though, were two men who would shortly make their mark on world events: Enver Bey, who assumed command in Cyrenaica, and Mustafa Kemal, who became his deputy.

As Enver Pasha, the former would in due course take the Ottoman Empire into war on the side of the Central Powers. Mustafa Kemal would become later become more famous still – first as the Ottoman defender and victor at Gallipoli in 1915, and then as the saviour and founder of modern Turkey during the upheavals of 1918-1923.

Cyrenaica

The Italians had landed at Tobruk – already identified by them as the finest harbour on the whole North African coast – on 4 October 1911. In the first

Above The thinly veiled racism of this image was typical of the propaganda of empire in the early 20th century: heavily outnumbered white men are depicted facing a horde of primitive savages. In fact, the resistance comprised Ottoman regulars and Ottoman-supplied irregulars using modern weapons.

week of December, they occupied Nadura Hill in the Mureyera Valley and began digging in. Aware of the danger of allowing the Italians to consolidate here, Mustafa Kemal, as commander of the Tobruk region, ordered Sheikh Muberra of the Meryen tribe to attack the hill, which was defended by 200 Bersagheri.

Attacking at dawn, the Arabs, backed by a small force of Turkish regulars, surrounded the hill and brought it under heavy fire. Unsupported by naval gunfire, the Bersagheri were soon forced to withdraw, abandoning their stores, including three machine-guns. It was a small but unequivocal victory, one that ensured that the Italians in Tobruk, as elsewhere, remained confined to the coast. It also launched Mustafa Kemal's military career.

For all his faults, Enver Bey, too, was a forceful and charismatic leader, and quickly rallied the local tribes to the Ottoman cause. Having received the submission of those tribal leaders who ▷

Above Italian heavy artillery in action in the Libyan campaign. Pinned down on the coast, the Italians were easily able to hold their fortified positions with concentrated firepower. But they could make little impression in Libya's vast hinterland.

had remained in Derna and Benghazi, the Italians seem, despite events in Tripoli, to have been unprepared for probing attacks and an attempted Arab rebellion in Derna.

Derna

When, on 27 December, Arab tribesmen destroyed an aqueduct bringing fresh water into Derna, an Italian force was despatched to cover repair work. It soon came under attack from large numbers of Arabs. The nature of the ground forced the Italians to divide their force into three columns.

The right-hand Italian column was almost enveloped, and the mountain battery supporting it was only saved from capture by desperate hand-to-hand fighting. A bayonet charge by a battalion of elite Alpini was required to restore the situation, after which the whole force fell back to Derna. During the withdrawal the machine-gun section of the 26th Infantry Regiment was almost overrun, only surviving by driving their gun mules over a cliff and fighting their way through to the main body.

The Turks and Arabs kept up their pressure on the Italians at Derna – who consolidated their position by the construction of three great redoubts. Throughout January and February these came under repeated probing attacks and faced two serious assaults, both of which were beaten off with heavy losses.

On 3 March a battalion of the 35th Regiment moving up to occupy the central redoubt – the 'Lombardia' – was fired on by an Arab force which had approached the position under cover of darkness. As the fire-fight progressed, the Arabs attempted an encircling movement supported by Ottoman artillery and regular infantry.

The Italians rushed troops to the threatened sector, thus weakening their centre. The Ottoman leaders were quick to seize their opportunity and launched an assault that overran the mountain battery at the centre of the Italian line. Only a bayonet charge by a company of the 35th and the belated arrival of three Italian columns from Derna prevented disaster.

The failure of this attack, which cost the Turko-Arab forces 500 killed and many more wounded, including Enver Bey, hit by a shell splinter, gave the Italians in Derna several months' respite.

Above A coloursed photograph showing a young and seemingly pensive Mustafa Kemal on campaign in Cyrenaica in 1912 (left). He would prove himself a formidable commander at Gallipoli in 1915, and would later lead his country in the War of the Independence that led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s.

Naval power

Stalemated on land, the Italians attempted to exploit their superior naval power. On the first day of the war, Italian destroyers had sunk two Turkish torpedo boats off Prevesa, in what is now northern Greece. Further activity in those waters was effectively vetoed by Austria – nominally an ally of Italy's, but a wary and mistrustful one.

> An airship appears over the battlefield and halts above the contending forces at a height of 1,500 yards.
>
> **Bersaglieri officer,** Battle of Ain Zara, *December 1911*

In January 1912, however, an Italian flotilla sank seven Turkish gunboats at Kunfida on the Red Sea coast. The following month Italian warships sank two Turkish cruisers off Beirut – Ottoman casualties were heavy, whereas the Italians suffered no casualties and their ships received no direct hits.

The action off Beirut removed any potential threat to Italian troop transports, giving them control of the southern Mediterranean and opening the way for further action in the Aegean.

On 4 May 1912, General Amegho landed Italian troops on Rhodes, driving the 2,000-strong Turkish garrison up into the mountains. The Turks planned to conduct a guerrilla war from Psithos, six hours' march from Rhodes, but an attack by three Italian columns, two of them landed by sea, on 15 May surrounded the Turks and forced their surrender. By the end of the month, another 12 Dodecanese islands were in Italian hands.

Balkan imbroglio

Despite all its difficulties, by the autumn of 1912 Italy had got, or seemed about to get, everything it wanted from the ▷

Turks. Ottoman losses had been heavy, and the empire's hold on its remaining possessions looked increasingly precarious. None of this was lost on those who sought to profit from Turkey's weakness.

In the spring of 1912, months of negotiation between four Balkan kingdoms – Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro – bore fruit in the form of the Balkan alliance, the aim of which was to launch a joint offensive against the Turks to strip them of their European possessions. On 8 October, Montenegro declared war on the Turks, and its new allies followed suit a week later.

Keen to avoid further fighting, Italian diplomats now sought a favourable peace with the Turks as they found themselves under attack much closer to home. By the Treaty of Ouchy, signed on 18 October 1912, the Turks agreed to leave Libya, while retaining the right to maintain (at Ottoman expense and subject to Italian approval) a kadi, or judge, to represent the Ottoman sultan in his role as Caliph. In return, Italy would return Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands to Ottoman control.

The return of the islands never actually took place – in the confused situation at the end of the Great War the Italians managed to hold on to them. Meanwhile, Turkey's and the world's attention turned to the Balkans, where the members of the Balkan League were asset-stripping what remained of 'Turkey in Europe'. By the time the Treaty of Ouchy was signed, Bulgarian forces were marching on Constantinople.

The turmoil in the Balkans, which was to render the region dangerously unstable by the summer of 1914, was a direct result of Italy's attack on the Ottoman Empire. If Europe at this time was, in John Keegan's phrase, 'pregnant with war', the Continent was now going into labour.

As for Libya, it would not be until the 1920s that the Italians established control over parts of the interior. Cyrenaica today is dotted with the abandoned farms of Fascist-era settlers. Italy's Libyan empire would eventually provide a launch-pad for Mussolini's drive on British-ruled Egypt in 1940, triggering the long see-saw struggle between Axis and Allies for control of the Western Desert during the first half of the Second World War.

Above Italian soldiers and an Arab body. Italy's war of conquest in Libya was a dirty colonial conflict of the kind that had become familiar in the generation-long 'Scramble for Africa'. It had engendered fierce resistance. Victory was made possible only by the outbreak of the Balkan Wars.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julian Spilsbury is a former army officer and now a freelance writer and military historian. His books include *The Thin Red Line*, *The Indian Mutiny*, and *Military Disasters*.

The Western Front Association

founded 1980

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand is regarded as the spark that lit the conflagration that was the First World War. But modern historians still disagree on who built the bonfire in the first place and who fanned the flames after Sarajevo. Austria? Germany? France? Russia? Britain? All could gain. And all would lose.

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BECOMING Custer

The death of Custer and his 7th Cavalry detachment at the Little Big Horn is legendary. US military historian Robert Bateman assesses a career that culminated in one of America's most famous disasters.

In June 1876, Major-General George Armstrong Custer and 261 of his men perished before a Native American onslaught on a scale unprecedented in the history of the wars on the American Plains.

In the 137 years since, he has been both lauded and derided in so many cycles that his reputation today bears almost no relation to the man himself. This is unsurprising. Custer's defeat and death shocked a nation, and strong emotions always follow such events.

In the process, however, competing battle narratives have eclipsed the memory of the pre-Little Big Horn Custer. Uncovering the 'real' Custer means going back significantly further. To understand the man who lost both his life and his reputation on 24 June 1876, we need to look at the conflicts that formed him.

Career soldier from the frontier

Born in December 1839 in rural Ohio, Custer was a product of the American Frontier. As the 'frontier' moved westward across the continent, so too did new standards of personal behaviour. Civilised men were expected to be more refined, to follow the rule of law, and to adhere to a more genteel code of living.

But as the frontier and its rough-and-ready manners moved west, it left in its wake young men raised in one tradition but overtaken by another. This was the foundation of Custer's personality. He was the product

of a frontier honour culture that no longer existed in most of America

That would have been a problem if he had remained a civilian. But when he went to the American military academy at West Point four years before the start of the American Civil War, he met others who believed in the same code, others who reinforced ideas like honour, personal heroics, and the flair that a man should ideally display

At West Point Custer enjoyed himself, flouting rules and regulations with aplomb and a seemingly amused sense of detachment. But he also made no bones about where his allegiance rested: he was a Union man. That, however, should be overlaid with an understanding that he was no polite, genteel, modern Northerner; he was a Westerner, a frontiersman.

So it is no surprise that one of the first solid vignettes we have of young Custer, one that occurred mere days after his graduation in June 1861, involved the concept of honour

A matter of honour

Custer was the officer-of-the-guard one morning when a fight broke out among the cadets. When told that one cadet had offended the honour of another by making disparaging remarks about the other's sister, Custer allowed the fight to continue, bellowing 'Stand back boys, let's have a fair fight', to the cheers of the assembled cadet body, while he himself acted as referee

Then a more senior officer arrived and put a stop to it all. Soon after, and only a few weeks after graduation, Custer himself faced a court of officers on the very same charges for which he should have restrained and confined the cadets The Union was now at war, however, so Custer dodged the bullet. ▷

> Custer was the product of a frontier honour culture that no longer existed in most of America.

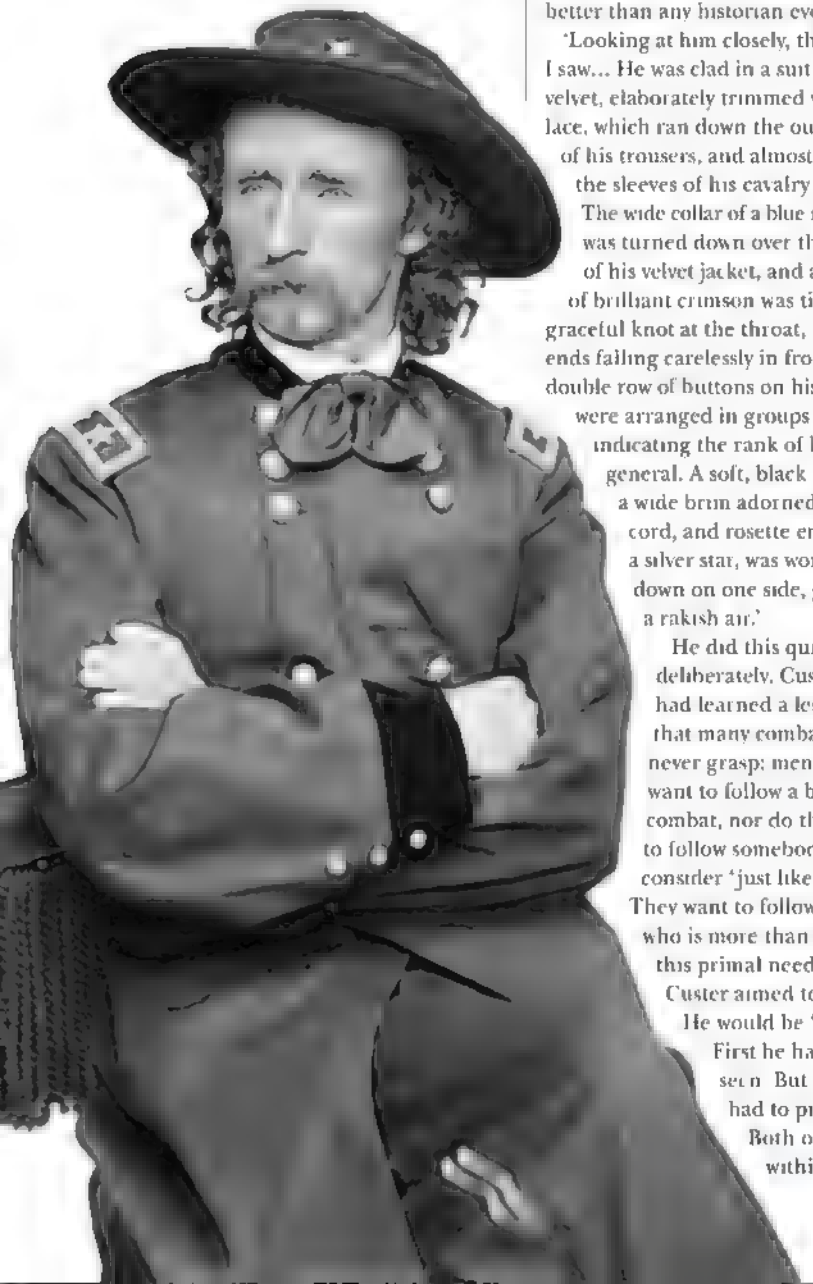
Above This scene from the 19th century book *American Frontier Life* conveys something of the romantic ideal which shaped Custer's life.

Left The unmistakable figure of Major-General George Armstrong Custer But how did this dashing young commander become such a contentious figure in American history?

In an engagement in May 1862, while serving as an aide to a general and carrying orders to a combat unit, then-Lieutenant Custer plunged into the fight himself and singlehandedly captured a Confederate captain and five enlisted men, as well as the first ever set of Confederate regimental colours taken by the Army of the Potomac. And he did so while personally leading an unofficial countercharge.

Subsequently, on two different occasions, he effectively took command of not one, but several regiments simultaneously. At moments of crisis on the field of battle, he led men who did not know him to victory. Repeatedly. He was 23 years old.

Below Custer deliberately cultivated his 'rakish air' to be visually striking on and off the battlefield. He identified early on that his outlandish image would add to his iconic status.



Dressing up

Having been an officer for a grand total of two years and one month, Captain Custer then made the most improbable leap imaginable, from captain to brigadier-general. He was to take command of the Michigan Brigade of cavalry immediately. It was the end of June 1863.

Custer's first official act? He directed his orderly to find a tailor, as he would need new uniforms. But these were not just any uniforms. In the plain-spun, blue-dyed-wool, egalitarian Army of the Potomac, Custer would make a sartorial mark. Instead of the normal uniform, Custer appeared before his command in an outfit that drew more from the lineage of Rupert's Cavaliers than anything else. James H Kidd served with Custer in that brigade, and described his arrival on his first day in command better than any historian ever could.

'Looking at him closely, this is what I saw... He was clad in a suit of black velvet, elaborately trimmed with gold lace, which ran down the outer seams of his trousers, and almost covered the sleeves of his cavalry jacket. The wide collar of a blue navy shirt was turned down over the collar of his velvet jacket, and a necktie of brilliant crimson was tied in a graceful knot at the throat, the long ends falling carelessly in front. The double row of buttons on his breast were arranged in groups of twos indicating the rank of brigadier-general. A soft, black hat with a wide brim adorned with gilt cord, and rosette encircling a silver star, was worn turned down on one side, giving him a rakish air.'

He did this quite deliberately. Custer had learned a lesson that many combat leaders never grasp: men do not want to follow a boy into combat, nor do they want to follow somebody they consider 'just like them'. They want to follow somebody who is more than them, and this primal need is what Custer aimed to satisfy. He would be 'more'. First he had to be seen. But then he had to prove himself. Both occurred within days.

Gettysburg

Custer's Michigan Brigade was stationed far out on the left of the Union line at Gettysburg. Lee had dispatched Jeb Stuart's Rebel cavalry to try to turn the flank and get in among the Union baggage at the rear. The aim was to unsettle the main Union line on the long ridge running south from Gettysburg as it faced a massive artillery bombardment and infantry assault. Custer's brigade was heavily outnumbered.

What followed was a swirling, chaotic mass of charges and countercharges, mounted and dismounted, as the Union forces wrestled with a Confederate mass several times their own size. If the Rebels had got through, Lee's grand vision would probably have come true. But Custer's men, personally led in every single charge by their boy-general, inflicted a stunning and nearly unprecedented defeat on Stuart's celebrated cavalry corps.

The crisis on the flank witnessed Custer riding to the front of his last remaining uncommitted regiment and leading them in a desperate charge against eight full regiments of Confederate cavalry. Bellowing 'Come on you Wolverines!' (the wolverine is the emblematic animal of the state of Michigan), Custer took his men into the vortex and, amazingly, forced the enemy to retreat.

Stuart was stopped. Lee's plan was unhinged. The Rebel infantry assault was crushed.

George Armstrong Custer may have saved the Union that day. He certainly played a key role in the victory. He was still only 24. Matters may have gone to his head. His subsequent emotional development was perhaps unsteady from 3 July 1863 onwards.

At moments of crisis on the field of battle, he led men who did not know him to victory. Repeatedly. He was 23 years old.

The Wolverines

Within weeks almost every soldier of Custer's command had bought their own red neckerchiefs similar to his own. Done partially in homage to their now-idolised commander, and partially in an effort to conceal him from the enemy by making themselves as conspicuous, it was a telling show of morale and of the effect that a single man can have upon the spirit of a unit. As one proud veteran later recounted about Custer, 'Our boy-general never says, "Go in men!" He says, with that whoop and yell of his, "Come on boys!", and in we go, you bet.'

Custer's star continued to ascend. In engagement after engagement he emerged victorious. Custer seemed to have a sixth sense on the battlefield and on raids. Evading ambushes and even counter-ambushing the ambushers, he plugged gaps at critical moments, and slashed across the Confederates at every opportunity. He became a national hero. Soon a major-general, then the U S Army's highest rank, he was given command of his own division at just 26 years of age.

In one smashing assault late in the war, his men took 32 regimental colours in a single action. Finally, it was Custer and his hard-riding division who swooped around the flank and stopped Lee's army from escaping Appomattox to fight another day, thus bringing the war to an end. He was the ultimate hero of the United States. Young, attractive, dashing, and daring in all the right ways, he held the nation's heart.

Maladjusting to peace

This, then, was the Custer of 1865. How well would he fit into the peacetime military?

For starters, the soldiers he subsequently commanded were quite different from those he had led in the 'Wolverine Brigade' during the Civil War. The Wolverines were volunteers from a single location with a defining purpose and sustained combat experience *in lieu* peacetime training; the unit he joined afterwards was none of these things.

Custer found himself in a peacetime army that he had never experienced before, and took charge of a brand new unit that had no heritage. It was a unit of peacetime volunteers from the lowest echelons of society, men who enlisted as a last resort and not in pursuit of a noble and unifying national vision like the men he had commanded in the war. And it was a unit with officers who had an entirely different vision of what their commander should be like.

In July 1866, even as the demobilisation of the massive volunteer forces of the Civil War came to an end, the US Congress authorised the creation of four new cavalry regiments for the Regular Army. With the end of the American Civil War, the overriding concern for the United States was the patrolling of the ever-expanding frontier region. On 23 November 1863, War Department General Orders Number 92 authorised the creation of the 7th United States Cavalry. It would take only six months in this Regular Army unit for Custer to call controversy down on his own head – again. ▷

Above Cheyenne warriors on horseback. Custer was ordered to put a stop to Indian attacks on settlers, but did not have much initial success.

Above Following the 7th Cavalry's attack on the Cheyenne leader Black Kettle's camp, Custer took a number of women, children, and old men prisoner.

The 7th Cavalry

The 7th Cavalry spent most of their first year patrolling what was then known as the Department of the Missouri. At the time, fairly strained relations existed between the Native Americans and American settlers. Civilians in Kansas were dealing with raids by the Cheyenne and Kiowa tribes.

In 1867 Custer received orders to terminate Indian attacks on settlers. With the concentrated capabilities of a full regiment of cavalry, the mission had a reasonable chance for success. But the campaign against the Indians was a failure.

The regiment spent months on the Plains looking for the evasive Indians to no avail. With each passing week, as hardship piled upon hardship while the unit cast about fruitlessly in search of the 'hostiles', morale among the common soldiers slipped lower and lower. Desertions increased steadily.

This was more than the young George Custer could handle. He was used to the highly motivated soldiers of the Civil War. Frustration with this new brand of soldier changed the boisterous 'boy-general' into an authoritarian.

Then Custer went over the line. He issued vague orders implying that he wanted any trooper who tried to desert shot. In one case, following desertion by several soldiers, these orders were implemented. This was the beginning of the schism in the command that was part and parcel of the disaster that befell the unit nine years later. Opinion among 7th Cavalry officers polarised: you were either for Custer or against; there was precious little middle-ground.

Court martial

Exacerbating the situation was the fact that Custer granted himself privileges he was not entitled to. At one point that year he left his command and took unofficial leave to visit his wife. At other times he used the unit ambulances to convey his 'personal party' from one fort to another. Finally, while on marches, he set such a pace that many horses (government property, of course) died of exhaustion. Eventually it became too much. Combined with the animosity of half of his officers, a showdown was inevitable. It came on the legal front.

Custer now faced the second court martial of his short career. Of course, in light of his previous heroic service (and the potential for bad publicity), the actual sentence was comparatively light: suspension of rank, pay, and command of the 7th Cavalry for a period of one year. The hero of the Civil War had suffered his first real defeat. He experienced a disgrace that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Custer spent the year in Monroe, Michigan. There he hunted, fished, started writing his memoirs of the Civil War, and, perhaps disastrously, dabbled in political writing. Because of his self-promoting and overblown style, his prose actually sold, and sold well. The result was a partial return to the national spotlight.

During his absence, the 7th Cavalry pursued, but rarely caught up with, bands of the Cheyenne. From the point of view of the US government, the 'Indian problem' became more severe during the early months of 1868. General Philip Sheridan, Custer's final commander during the Civil War, recalled Custer to command of the 7th Cavalry in autumn 1868. Custer, it turns out, was the only one thought capable of actually catching the Indians.

Black Kettle

In 1868 the US government moved the Comanche and Kiowa tribes to an area that did not have the resources to feed both nations. The resultant lack of food was the proximate cause for factions of these tribes to form raiding parties and go on the warpath. To

counter this, General Sheridan ordered several regiments to start patrolling the southern Plains of the frontier in the spring and summer of 1868.

Black Kettle was one of the most outspoken Cheyenne leaders agitating for peace with the United States. He even flew an American flag above his encampment. But this would not matter that winter, for although Black Kettle had peace in his heart, several of his young warriors did not. The tracks in the snow of one group of young raiders led straight back to his village.

Under the cover of a blizzard, the 7th Cavalry closed on the camp during the night, waiting to attack the village at dawn. At first light, Custer gave the command and ordered the regimental band to play the regimental song 'Garryowen' as the audible signal for all elements of the command to commence their attack.

The village was burned, horses shot, and several women, old men, and children taken prisoner. Custer had his first taste of success as an Indian fighter. The 7th Cavalry had been baptised in fire and blood.

Yellowstone River

By 1873 Custer and his regiment were considered among the best US fighting forces on the American Plains. Their new assignment found them in Montana trying to control elements of the Sioux nation.

On 4 August, as the regiment approached Fort Keogh, Montana, Custer scouted ahead with a force of about 90 men. Roughly 300 Sioux braves set upon this separate group on the north bank of the Yellowstone River.

Opinion among 7th Cavalry officers polarised: you were either for Custer or against; there was precious little middle-ground.

The Indians, on horseback, were well armed with modern breech-loaders. Outnumbered from the outset, Custer did the logical thing and dismounted his men to form a thin skirmish line. The fighting lasted approximately 3½ hours, with the Native American warriors making several costly mounted charges against Custer's positions.

When his ammo ran low, Custer fell back on the maxim that the best defence is a good attack. He remounted his party and directed a charge. This action apparently caught the Indians off-balance, and threw them into retreat.

On 11 August, while the regiment camped along the Yellowstone and Big Horn rivers, the Indians attacked again. This time the fighting lasted the better part of a day. Again the tactical situation was marked by mounted charges by the Sioux warriors, some that came to within 30m of the 7th's lines.

But once again the fighting ended when Custer collected the regiment and led a massed counterattack against one section of the encircling Indians. As the warriors did not fight as 'units', this succeeded in scattering those Indians to their front, which caused the further collapse of the rest of the Sioux attack. The 7th pursued the scattering Native Americans, largely unsuccessfully, for another 8 miles, before stopping to regroup.

Custer had learned a few things about fighting the Native Americans. First, the enemy did not stand and hold ground well. Second, they moved fast; even entire villages could move faster than the standard cavalry regiment, tied to a logistics train as it usually was. And finally, when outnumbered, the key was to hold your ground with dismounted forces. If you were outnumbered and surrounded, you could always form a concentrated wedge and break free of the Indians' disjointed and personalised encirclement.

These lessons were generally sound. But they were not iron rules. They did not always apply. They did not apply at the Little Big Horn.

Little Big Horn

The story of Custer's final battle is the subject of more than 1,300 books, plays, movies, and essays. A summation will therefore suffice.

In June 1876 the 12 troops of the 7th United States Cavalry, operating as an independent column, moved into the ▷

Below The Battle of the Little Big Horn, showing Native Americans on horseback in the foreground.

Above *Custer's Last Charge* (1876) by Feodor Fuchs. Popularised in books, plays, and films, the charge has been portrayed as a noble act of self-sacrifice. **Right** Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show performers portray a Native American man stabbing Custer, with dead Native Americans lying on the ground. Custer's death gave rise to dozens of legends about the man whose character has been so hotly debated for the past 137 years.

area of the Valley of the Little Big Horn River. There they discovered a massive village of the Lakota Sioux people.

On the morning of 25 June the regiment split into three elements. Then they moved into the Valley of the Little Big Horn itself. One column, under the command of Major Marcus Reno, attacked the southern end of the village, while a second column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Custer, attempted an envelopment of the village.

Reno was repulsed, as was Custer when his envelopment hit the middle of the village rather than the end. Even when he managed to swing around, several miles, to the other end of the encampment, Custer was met by swarms of warriors and again repulsed.

The village was by far the largest ever seen, by Native American or US Cavalryman; an estimated 7,000-10,000 people were moving together that summer.

Reno fell back to the shelter of a stand of trees, and then further across the Little Big Horn river and up onto a nearby bluff, where he was later joined by the third column, led by Captain Benteen, who led two companies and the pack mules.

Custer, who by his actions had attracted the attention of the majority of the native warriors, saw his companies destroyed piecemeal before being entirely overrun sometime in the late afternoon. Five entire troops died with Custer. Overall, nearly half the strength of the regiment fell that day – and a legend or, more accurately, dozens of legends were born.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Bateman is a history graduate and former history teacher, who is now a freelance writer. Several generations of his family lived close to the battlefield of Mortimer's Cross.

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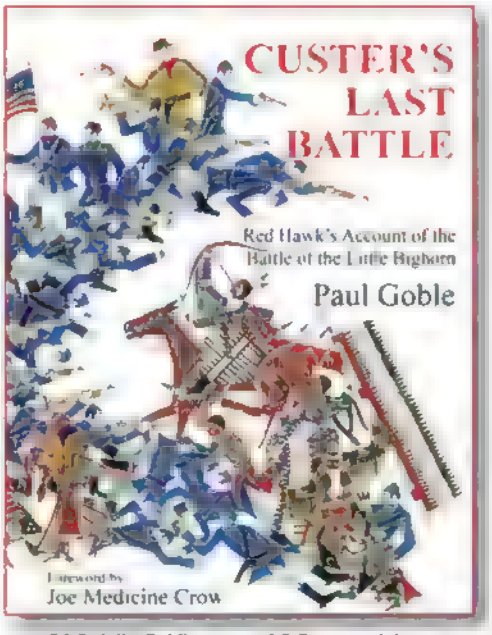

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Left David Tomlinson, Lana Morris, and Richard Attenborough in Peter Ustinov's *School for Secrets*.

SCHOOL FOR SECRETS

Taylor Downing reviews a film that made heroes of behind-the-scenes science boffins.

The word 'boffin' became widely used during the Second World War as an affectionate term to describe the scientists who worked quietly in the background developing new military technologies. The origins of the word are not clear.

There was a strange-looking character in the Dickens novel *Our Mutual Friend* called Nicodemus Boffin. However, the word was probably an acronym of the words 'back office intern'. The word also carried with it associations of being rather eccentric and unusual, of a character who labours long and hard in secret to invent devices that are incomprehensible to most people but which have dramatic, even revolutionary military effects.

School for Secrets (produced, written, and directed by Peter Ustinov in 1946) is 'the story of a handful of boffins' An opening caption explains the film is 'a tribute to all scientists, to the men and women of all ranks in all three services, and the civilians who worked side by side with them on the development of radar'.

Another opening caption offers its own explanation of the etymology of the word boffin, saying that it emerged in RAF slang alongside words like 'prang', 'scramble', and 'wizard'. It goes on to suggest humorously that it derived from the mating of a Puffin with a Baffin ('an obsolete service aircraft') to produce a bird that 'bursts with weird and sometimes inopportune ideas' of 'staggering inventiveness'!

Seaside landlady

The film opens in July 1939 with five eccentric scientists being called to a meeting at the Air Ministry. They are asked to do immediate war work on developing new uses for radar. 'If and when war comes,' explains the man from the Ministry, 'we will need to conscript science just as we conscript soldiers.'

The leading figure of the group is Professor Heatherville (played by Ralph Richardson). He is a zoologist who specialises in the study of reptiles, and cannot imagine why he has been asked to join the distinguished group of physicists. He is wanted for his inquisitiveness, explains the man from the Ministry.

The other four scientists are the rather grand Professor Laxton-Jones (Raymond Huntley), a Scottish academic Dr McVitie (beautifully played by John Laurie), Dr Dainty (Ernest Jay),

SCIENCE AT WAR

Scientists played an enormously important role during the Second World War. One leading scientist said you can 'hardly walk in any direction in this war without tumbling over a scientist'

The key areas in which boffins played a vital role included: the development of radar along the Suffolk coast at Bawdsey Manor in the years from 1936 to 1939; in the work of the Telecommunicat ons Research Establishment (TRE) at Worth Matravers and at Malvern College; at the code-breaking centre of Bletchley Park and its outstations; in the operational research teams that worked with the Royal Navy, the Army, and the RAF in all theatres of the war; and in the scientific departments of the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Air Ministry.

Most boffins were anonymous figures working quietly for the public good behind the scenes. But some scientists did achieve great public acclaim during the war. Prime Minister Winston Churchill's principal adviser and confidante was the Oxford scientist Professor Frederick Lindemann, known universally as 'the Prof' He produced thousands of short papers on every aspect of science in the war, and regularly provided a statistical overview of the operation of government. It was said of Lindemann by his biographer that his role as Churchill's scientific adviser gave him 'power greater than that exercised by any scientist in history'. In 1942 Churchill him made Lord Cherwell.

Other key boffins known to the public during the war were: Sir Henry Tizard, the Rector of Imperial College, London, who supervised the introduction of many new scientific ideas into the armed services; Sir Robert Watson Watt, known as 'the father of radar'; Sir Solly Zuckerman, who worked on operational research; and Sir Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the bouncing bomb and the other deep-penetration bombs like Tallboy and Grand Slam.

Above Ralph Richardson playing zoologist Professor Heatherville.

and a young engineer from a radio company called Mr Watlington (David Tomlinson). The five scientists each have different and rather odd characteristics from which much humour is derived through the film.

The five boffins are rather improbably sent off with their wives to an imaginary seaside town called Kipping Hampton, where they are billeted in a big Victorian house run by Mrs Arnold (nicely played by Marjorie Rhodes as the typical, nosey landlady). She is suspicious of her guests, and tries repeatedly to find out what they are up to.

But engaged on secret war work, they cannot reveal anything. Instead it is her son Jack (played by a young Richard Attenborough, who was by then well on the way to stardom), an RAF pilot, who discovers that they are 'the greatest scientists in Britain' when he is asked to fly some of their experimental missions. Towards the end of the film, when Jack reveals this to his mother, the landlady replies 'Oh, if I had known, I'd have treated you all much better.'

Radar

The film features several scientific technologies, but all the actors struggle to bring their characters to life. Each comes across in a rather forced theatrical way, probably because Peter Ustinov was an experienced theatre-writer. Even Ralph Richardson finds it hard to pull off the role of the boffin who is a mix of whacky inventiveness and pompous self-importance.

John Laurie at least brings his Scottish scientist alive in a way that is both entertaining and endearing. Of course, Laurie went on to be inseparably associated with the Second World War

> Even Ralph Richardson finds it hard to pull off the mix of whacky inventiveness and pomposity.

to a later generation by playing the dour Scot Private Frazer in *Dad's Army*.

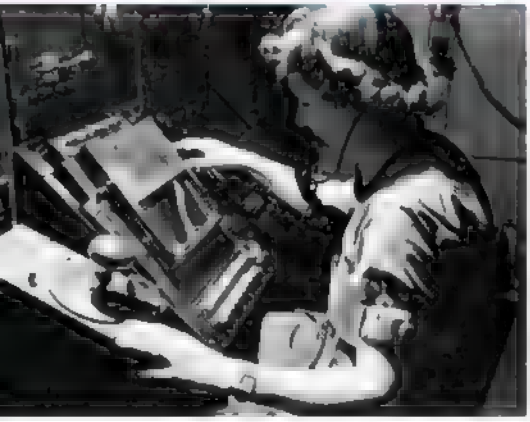
The most interesting sections of the film tell the story of the men and women who worked on radar and developed it into new areas. The film flashes forward to 12 August 1940, when the Luftwaffe stepped up its attacks on Britain. The film convincingly portrays a group of WAAF radar operators at Ventnor under attack from Luftwaffe bombers. They continue to pass on the bearing and number of the raiders to Fighter Command headquarters, even though the roof is blown in above them. This is based on fact. The radar station at Ventnor was bombed heavily that day, and was put out of action for ten days.

Even though several radar stations along the Kent coast were also bombed,

PETER USTINOV

Known in later life as a raconteur and television celebrity, Ustinov began his career as an actor and writer for the theatre. In 1942 he was struggling to make a living when he was called up into the Army. He served a frustrating year as a private, before being transferred to the Army Kinematograph Service, where he wrote scripts for propaganda films. He also acted in several top feature-films, including *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1942) and *The Way Ahead* (dir. Carol Reed, 1944).

Filippo del Giudice was the head of Two Cities Films, which made a string of great wartime classics, from Noël Coward's *In Which We Serve* (1942) (see *MHM* 30) to Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944). Del Giudice decided to ask Ustinov to write and direct a film for him. The Air Ministry were keen to have a film made about the story of radar. Ustinov was told to research the subject and start writing. He was 24 years old, and *School for Secrets* was his directorial debut.



Above WAAF radar operators. The sections of the film dealing with radar tend to provide the most interesting scenes.

Goering's Luftwaffe did not realise how central they were to the fighter defence of Britain, and the raids were never repeated. It was a dreadful blunder, and the radar stations were soon back in action, enabling Fighter Command to plot each new raid as it appeared, and to scramble Hurricane and Spitfire fighters accordingly. There are many reasons why the Germans lost the Battle of Britain, but without radar it would have been impossible for the RAF to have won it

Airborne Interception

In the autumn of 1940, as the German bombing of the Blitz brought regular night-time raids to the cities of Britain, the group of scientists are called on to improve the night-time operation of radar. Heatherville and Dr McVitie test out the night radar known as Airborne Interception (AI). One of them is to fly with Jack Arnold in a night-fighter

When Jack realises the boffins he is to work with are the lodgers in his mother's guest house, he asks his commanding officer in amazement 'Do they know about AI?' To which he gets the answer 'They invented it.'

This is the one section of the film where the story is historically completely wrong. The two scientists help the ground controllers and the pilot to get within a few yards of the German bomber and shoot it down

In reality, the RAF had no night radar that was effective at this point of the war. A pilot would normally need to get within about 300 yards of another aircraft to be able to visually identify it at night. The ground radar did not have anything like the level of accuracy needed to guide a fighter that close to an enemy bomber.

At Bawdsey before the war, the scientist 'Taffy' Bowen had developed a primitive form of airborne radar known as AI, but it had proved immensely difficult to miniaturise the heavy, valve-based equipment so as to carry it in a night-fighter.

The aircraft had to mount two dipole aerials, one along the wing and the other under the fuselage. The navigator had a cathode-ray tube, and by switching between the strength of the radar echo on each of the dipoles, he could instruct the pilot to fly up or down, or right or left

It was an incredibly difficult system to operate in the best conditions. At night, flying into a fleet of hostile enemy aircraft, it proved almost impossible Unlike the triumph in *School for Secrets*, by the end of 1940 only one German bomber had actually been shot down using AI

Missed targets

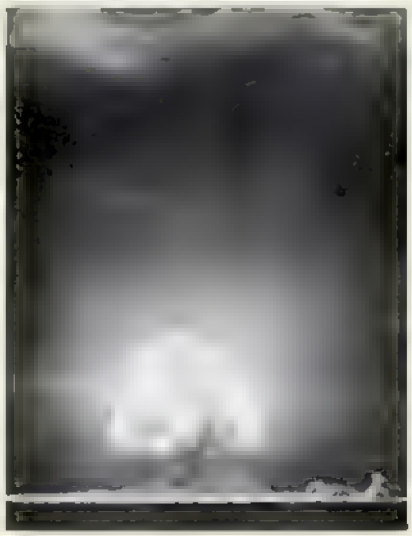
The next big scene in the film dramatises one of the regular meetings that took place at TRE (Telecommunications Research Establishment) at Worth Matravers in Dorset Here scientists, senior RAF officers, and top civil servants met together and openly discussed problems in the hope that someone present might come up with solutions. The meetings were nicknamed 'Sunday Soviets'

'Do they know about Airborne Interception?', asks Jack. To which he gets the answer 'They invented it.'

SCIENCE AT WAR

When war was declared, the scientists who had developed radar at Bawdsey Manor on the Suffolk coast were moved to the University of Dundee. It proved to be a disastrous move. The conditions were poor, and the boffins were a long way from the factories that were manufacturing their inventions. In May 1940 they moved back south to a new site on the Dorset coast near Swanage called Worth Matravers. Later that year, the operation was renamed the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE).

Great work was done here in developing the cavity magnetron that had been invented at Birmingham University, and in applying all the new advances in radar. One of the reasons for the success of TRE was that everyone was encouraged to share ideas. Senior Air Ministry officials, top RAF officers, and scientific advisers, including even Sir Frederick Lindemann, were regularly invited to join the boffins.



On one or two Sundays each month this curious mixture of boffins, civil servants, and serving officers gathered to kick around problems and try to find solutions. In some ways the Sunday Soviets were a brilliant example of democracy at war, with everyone encouraged to talk regardless of rank or status. In another way, they showed the openness with which the new generation of war scientists worked, by contrast to the rigid formalities of the military world.

In May 1942, after the Bruneval Raid, it was thought that TRE was at risk of a commando attack, and so it was moved to Malvern College in Worcestershire. Here the Sunday Soviets continued. In the post-war era, TRE eventually became the Royal Radar Establishment; Malvern was the centre of British radar research, and the place where computers were developed for use in guided missiles.

Above John Frost, who distinguished himself in the Bruneval Raid in 1942, went on to become a legendary figure in the Parachute Regiment and the British Army.

In *School for Secrets*, a senior officer from Bomber Command comes forward and admits that his force is losing too many men and machines, and that they are too often missing their targets, sometimes by several miles. He says the accuracy of their bombing is not good enough to justify the losses they are suffering.

To most cinema-goers in 1946, this would have been a remarkable revelation. Everyone watching the film had for years heard BBC radio announcers give details of the 'target for tonight', usually followed by glowing reports of factories in flames and enemy cities destroyed. To find out that at this stage of the war the RAF did not have the navigational aids to hit their targets would have been a big surprise.

Sadly, however, it was true. The RAF crews were not trained and equipped to fly hundreds of miles at night across a blacked-out Europe; unlike the Luftwaffe, they had no navigational aids to guide them to their targets.

The final sequence in the film is in many ways the most interesting. It is a dramatisation of the Bruneval Raid of February 1942 (see *MHM* 34). The film explains that there is a gap in the scientists' knowledge of the German radar system and they need to capture a radar station intact, dismantle it, and bring it back to Britain.

Many aspects of the raid are accurately reconstructed. A Para force is dispatched to carry out the mission, and even the detail that recovering the Würzburg bowl radar was the main objective is correct. One of the technical advisers on *School for Secrets* was Captain John Timothy, who had actually taken part in the Bruneval Raid. He enjoyed a few weeks before demobilisation at Denham Studios, where the film-makers were eager to get the details correct. Ustinov offered him a cameo part in the film, but the actors' union Equity blocked his appearance.

The one element of the raid in the film that was completely wrong historically was that one of the boffins actually goes on the raid. Ralph Richardson as Professor Heatherville is the unlikely figure who parachutes into enemy territory. He gets caught in a tree, and a Para has to help free him. He then dismantles the enemy radar under fire, as the engineers had actually done at Bruneval. Eventually all the Paras escape on landing craft that come in to take them and their precious cargo away, just as happened for real.

A fitting tribute

School for Secrets has countless flaws. It is stilted and over-theatrical. It tries to tell too many separate stories, and makes too many improbable jumps from one to another. An experienced director might have been able to pull it all together. But working with his own script, Ustinov was not up to the task in his directorial debut. Nevertheless, it is fascinating that so soon after the end of the war there was a film celebrating the tremendous achievement of the backroom scientists in developing radar.

In the last scene, with the war in Europe over and some of the scientists heading off to America to help build a bomb to end the war with Japan, Heatherville is asked what he did in the war. 'I was a boffin,' Ralph Richardson proudly answers. It is a fitting tribute to the British scientists who had contributed so much to the final victory. ■

Further information

A Two Cities Film written, produced, and directed by Peter Ustinov. Starring Ralph Richardson, Richard Attenborough, David Tomlinson, John Laune, and Marjorie Rhodes. A Simply Home Entertainment DVD.

Below A Würzburg Radar of the type installed at Bruneval, folded for transport, at the Imperial War Museum.

Flodden

SCOTLAND'S GREATEST DEFEAT

On Friday 9 September 1513, on a sodden Northumbrian hillside, the King of Scots was hacked down, and the flower of the Kingdom's nobility died alongside him. What brought these great men to disaster, and who was responsible for overwhelming them? Ross Cowan marks the 500th anniversary of Scotland's most terrible battle.

With King Henry VIII of England campaigning in France, King James IV of Scotland invaded Northumbria on 22 August 1513. It was not an opportunistic raid into the territory of the Auld Enemy. The King of Scots had given Henry (his brother-in-law) ample notice of his intentions: if bellicose Henry pressed on with his war against Scotland's ally, Louis XII of France, James would invade England.

The incursion proceeded well. Within a week, mighty Norham Castle, which had resisted James's attentions in 1497, was blasted into submission by the King's train of impressive new siege artillery. Three other fortresses were captured soon after, and the Till Valley was plundered with profit. Perhaps too much profit, for it encouraged a large number of Scots to return home early with their spoils. On 5 September James's army settled into an entrenched camp, complete with artillery emplacements, on the hill called Flodden Edge.

Here the King waited for the Earl of Surrey, to whom Henry had assigned the defence of the North. The earl had mustered a strong army from the northern counties and suggested, in a number of exchanges conducted by heralds, that James might meet him in

Images: © RHC Archive, unless otherwise stated **Map:** Ian Bull

Above Sir Edward Burne-Jones's violent and eerie depiction of the Battle of Flodden Field.

battle on a nearby plain called Millfield. James accepted the offer of battle, but was not about to give up the advantage of his lofty fortified camp

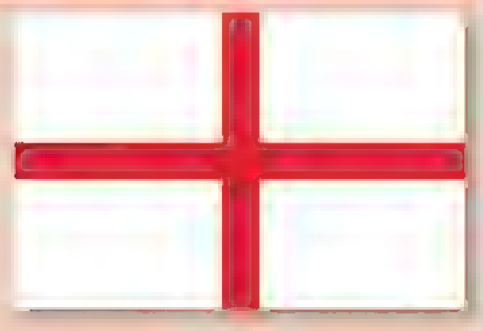
Manoeuvres and a smokescreen

Surrey had no desire to assault such a strong position. But, with his army running out of supplies, he had to force a battle quickly on more favourable terrain or he would be compelled to fall back. On 8-9 September, the earl deftly out-manoeuvred the King by marching his army in a great loop towards the River Tweed (as if he were going to launch a counter-strike into Scotland), and then swung south again to the village of Branxton, from where he could occupy Branxton Hill and threaten James's position on Flodden Edge from the rear

James was forced to abandon his entrenchments on Flodden Edge, but seized neighbouring Branxton Hill before Surrey could reach it, and arrayed his forces on its northern face for a field battle. The King apparently used a smoke-screen to cover the redeployment. Whether by luck or design, the burning of waste in the camp on Flodden Edge was carried by the southerly wind towards Surrey's army and effectively ▷

Surrey's light field artillery knocked out James's siege guns and then hurled shot into the waiting Scottish divisions.

THE ENGLISH ARMY



The Trewe Encountre reckons the total size of Surrey's army at Flodden as 26,000. The army was initially organised in two main 'battles' (divisions), each with two wings. The Lord Admiral's main battle (vanguard) numbered 9,000, with two wings of 3,000 under Edmund Howard and Sir Marmaduke Constable. The Earl of Surrey commanded the second battle (rearward) of 5,000 men, also with two wings of 3,000 under Thomas, Lord Dacre, and Sir Edward Stanley. The pay records of Surrey's army are in general agreement with *The Trewe Encountre*, suggesting an army of between 20,000 and 26,000.

Just before battle was joined, the Admiral and Surrey reordered the battle-line. Edmund Howard's wing formed the extreme right of the English line; the battles of the Admiral and Surrey formed the centre-right and centre-left. Stanley's wing should have secured the left, but the fighting began before his force was in line. Marmaduke Constable's wing does not figure in accounts of the fighting, and must have been absorbed by the Admiral's division. It is conceivable that some of his troops reinforced Surrey's division. Dacre's wing was held back as a reserve.

The Admiral reported only 400 English dead, but *The Trewe Encountre* and Edward Hall record 1,200 and 1,500 English dead and captured. If *The Trewe Encountre*'s figure of 26,000 for the total strength of the army is correct, then several thousand more Englishmen succumbed to their wounds in the days following the battle (the army was disbanded on 14 September). In the first printed edition of Polydore Vergil's *English History* (1534), the combined number of dead from both sides is 15,000: 10,000 Scots and 5,000 English. Some elements of the English army clearly suffered disproportionate losses. When the army mustered in August, the Earl of Surrey had 500 men in his personal retinue. After the battle, only 293 survived to receive their pay.

obscured the Scots as they marched across to Branxton Hill, dragging the artillery with them.

By late afternoon on Friday 9 September, the bulk of Surrey's army – less Sir Edward Stanley's division, which was still on the march – was positioned on Piper's Hill and a ridge of high ground that lay between Branxton village and Branxton Hill.

With the rearward of the army trailing on the march, the Lord Admiral (Surrey's son and second-in-command) feared that James's complete army would attack and overwhelm his vanguard. But the King obligingly held back and allowed Surrey's divisions to catch up and take their place on the ridge.

The English were ready to fight and opened proceedings. Surrey's light field artillery proved its value by knocking out James's far more powerful but slow-firing siege guns, and then proceeded to hurl shot into the waiting Scottish divisions.

Attack

With the Scots goaded into advancing down the hill (sometime between four and five in the afternoon), the English artillery withdrew. The Scottish army was organised into four divisions, each separated from the other by the distance of 'an arrow shot'.

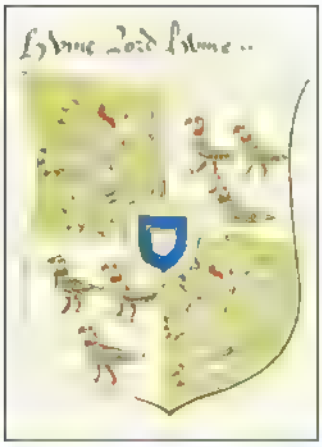
The English divisions were also widely separated; each would fight its own battle that day. The Scottish left, centre-left, and centre-right advanced one after the other in quick succession. The Scottish right, having no English division positioned opposite it, remained where it was.

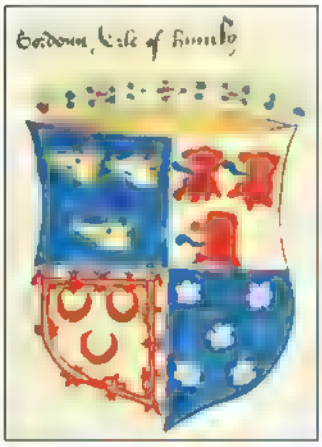
The Border pikemen of Lord Home and the Highlanders of the Earl of Huntly, forming the left of the Scottish line, led the attack. They swept down the hill and batted aside the right wing of the English army.

Few of Edmund Howard's 3,000 men, the levies of Cheshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, held their ground. Hugely outnumbered, many of the Englishmen simply panicked at the sight of the solid phalanx of Border pikemen bearing down on them. Those who stood were run through by the pikes (soon after, a Cheshire bard sang of blood bursting out of the Englishmen's broken armour), or shot down and hacked to pieces by Huntly's Highland gentlemen.

The Scottish historian Lindsay of Pitscottie, writing later in the 16th century, describes how the 'Highland men with their bows and two-handed swords fought so manfully that they defeated the Englishmen without any slaughter to their own side'. Like the English archers, the Highlanders had to contend with bowstrings soaked by the persistent rain, but the strong south wind was at their backs and their arrows flew true. Moreover, unlike the Border pikemen, who were arrayed shoulder to shoulder, the Highlanders fought in open order with plenty of room in which to work their way past the eight-foot-long English bills and swing their deadly two-handed swords.

Edmund Howard did not flee. His standard-bearer stood with him, but was promptly hacked to pieces. Howard himself was beaten to the ground three times. According to *The Trewe Encountre*, a contemporary Northumbrian account, 'like a courageous and a hardy young lusty





gentleman he recovered and fought again'. The Scots clearly wanted Howard alive, he was worth a handsome ransom.

Pause to plunder

The Scottish left had won its battle The main strength of the English army, the 9,000-12,000 strong division commanded by Thomas Howard, the Lord Admiral (Edmund's elder brother), was by now receiving the charge of the second Scottish pike division led by the Earls of Errol and Crawford.

One might have expected Home and Huntly to have swung right and attacked the Admiral's flank, but they did not It is doubtful that the Borderers only recently equipped with the pike and hastily trained in its use by French drill-masters, could have achieved such a manoeuvre The victorious Scots instead paused to plunder the dead and wounded and to capture valuable prisoners like Edmund Howard.

But Howard was not taken. Despite being sorely wounded, John Heron the Bastard (a notorious English Borderer much despised by the Scots) came to Howard's aid, and they cut their way towards the Admiral's division. Sir David Home of Wedderburn (Lord Home's brother) stood in their way, but Howard 'slew him with his own hand'.

The situation on the English right was restored by Lord Dacre. Rushing up from the reserve with 1,500 fresh men, he fell on Home and Huntly's now disordered plunderers. According to the Admiral's own account of the fighting, 'eight score' of Dacre's relief force were killed, but a raft of leading Scots were slain, including many Gordons (kinsmen of the Earl of Huntly) and Homes

Home and Huntly prudently recalled their men to the standards, and Dacre did not interfere. The English right was re-secured, and the Scottish left reformed, but there would be no more fighting on this western flank of the battlefield.

'Pure fighting'

Lord Home's phalanx had advanced down Branxton Hill in excellent order, meeting no natural obstruction. The pike division led by the Earls of Errol and Crawford was not so fortunate.

The ground before it appeared clear, but it was certainly muddy. The miserable early autumn weather had left the ground saturated, and the Scotsmen kicked off their shoes and boots to get more purchase on the slippery slopes with stockinged feet.

At the foot of the hill, the Scots encountered a previously unnoticed stream and dip in the ground. The stream was crossed and they charged ▷

> Many of the Englishmen panicked at the sight of the solid phalanx of Border pikemen bearing down on them.

THE SCOTTISH ARMY

The size of the Scottish army is not easy to determine James IV certainly mustered an unusually large force in August 1513, but, by the time of the battle, desertion had much reduced its strength. The Admiral's claim of 80,000 Scots at Flodden is clearly exaggerated. It is possible that 35,000 to 40,000 men were still with James when he took up position on Braxton Hill, but most scholars now estimate the actual fighting strength of the Scottish army as rather less than 30,000. It outnumbered Surrey's force, but not by the huge margin that is often assumed

Only the Admiral and Edward Hall (drawing on a lost contemporary notice) provide estimates of the sizes of individual Scottish divisions. The Admiral reckoned the phalanx led by Crawford and Errol at 6,000. Hall's source put the size of Home's Border division at 10,000, perhaps a reasonable estimate if one includes in it Huntly's Highlanders.

The author of *The Trewe Encountre* estimated the number of Scots killed as 11,000-12,000. We might have killed more of them, he grumbled, if the battle had started earlier in the day. The Lord Admiral put Scottish casualties at 10,000, and opined that 10,000 more would have been slain if there had been horses to mount a determined pursuit. Fortunately for the retreating Scots, treacherous English Borderers had raided Surrey's camp and stolen most of the horses.

In the weeks following the battle, a Florentine agent in Flanders received information that 4,000 Scots were killed. Whatever the actual number (scholars now estimate 5,000-8,000), Flodden was such a crushing defeat because of the disproportionate losses suffered by the Scottish élite In the space of a few hours Scotland lost her King, an archbishop and several other senior churchmen, at least nine earls and fourteen important lords, and scores of knights, lairds, and other gentlemen.

Image: © D McEntee

Above Plan of the Battle of Flodden, 9 September 1513, showing Surrey's outflanking march, the Scottish divisional attacks, English counter-moves, and the direction of the Scottish rout. **Left** The north face of Branxton Hill viewed from the Admiral's position on Piper's Hill. The Admiral would have seen (from left to right = east to west) the divisions of Argyll and Lennox, James IV, Errol and Crawford, and Home and Huntly. The latter advanced over clear ground, but the phalanxes of Errol and Crawford and the King were disordered by crossing the stream at the foot of Branxton Hill. Sir Edward Stanley, who led his force up the east side of Branxton Hill (out of shot, to the left), surprised Argyll and Lennox's division as it marched to the relief of King James's phalanx.

up the easier slope of Piper's Hill, but the neat ordered ranks of the novice pikemen were now in disorder, and the momentum essential for a successful charge of pikes had been lost.

As on the right flank of the English army, the persistent rain and wind had robbed the English bows of power and accuracy. The Scots' heavy armour – remarked upon in contemporary reports of the battle – made them almost invulnerable to arrows, unless 'it hit them in some bare place'.

The English archers withdrew and the billmen 'came to handstrokes'. The relatively narrow Scottish column was soon engulfed by the linear formation of the Admiral's division. The Scots' 18-foot-long pikes were useless in such close combat and were promptly dropped; they continued the fight with 'great and sharp swords'.

Modern analysts of the battle emphasise the limitations of the long sword against the bill. The eight-foot-long bill easily outreached the sword, and could be used to cut, thrust at, or hook an opponent. The Scots may have been better equipped with short thrusting swords; if they could have worked their way past the bill heads, the Englishmen would then have been at their mercy.

In fact, it would have made little difference. Enveloped and crushed together, they simply did not have the room to manoeuvre.

According to *The Rout of the Scots*, an epic Italian poem composed soon after the battle, David Lindsay, the Earl of Crawford, fought not with a sword but with a halberd, and so could reach the billmen: '[he] furiously knocks down, maims, and slays many men'.

But eventually Crawford, and the rest of his division, was defeated by what Edward Hall, the Tudor historian, memorably describes as 'pure fighting'.

The Admiral's men fought under St Cuthbert's banner, specially brought from Durham Cathedral. The saint was with them and they could not lose.

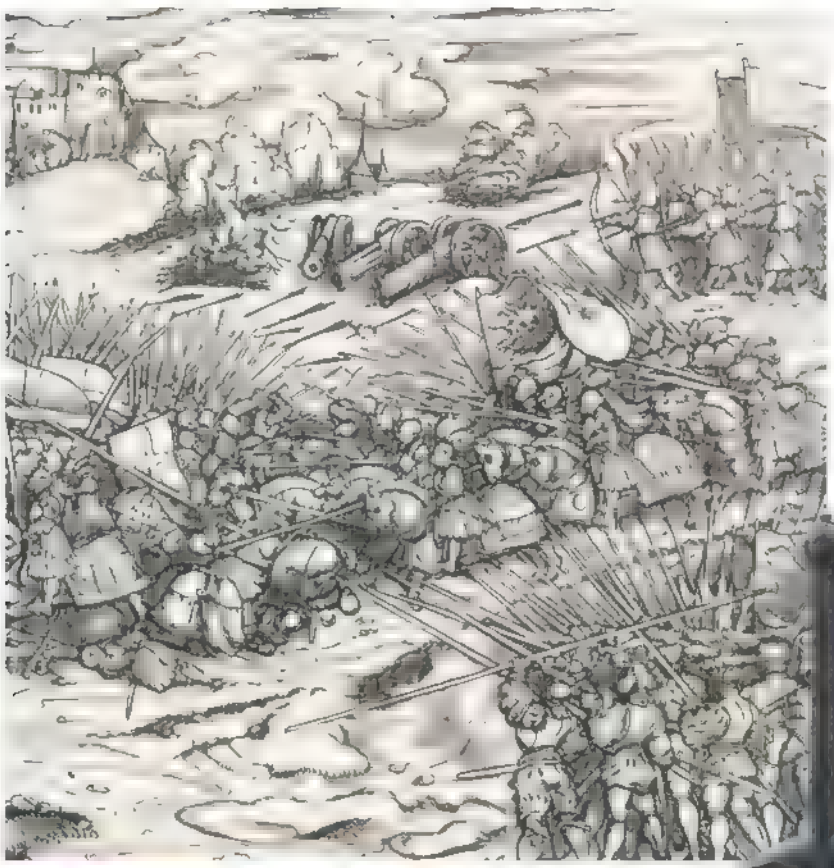


Image: © author's collection

Above Bowmen in action (at the top right of this picture) in Hans Burgkmair's woodcut of the Battle of the Spurs (also fought in 1513). The usually formidable English archer made little impact at Flodden. Rain and wind robbed his weapon of power and accuracy, and the arrows generally failed to penetrate the Scots' strong armour.
Right A two-handed Highland sword of the type used by Huntly's men in their rout of the English right at Flodden.
Left Thomas Howard, Lord Admiral at the time of Flodden, and later the third Duke of Norfolk. He was abrasive of character but formidable in battle – on land and sea.

Before the battle, the Admiral had promised no quarter to any Scotsman, including King James. He was true to his word: men of wealth and status were not taken for ransom. Crawford and Errol, as well as the Earl of Montrose, a host of knights, lairds, gentlemen, and commoners whose wealth was sufficient for them to qualify for the levy, were slaughtered.

No mean soldier

James IV, King of Scots, took his place in the front rank and led the third Scottish pike division into action. The strength of his phalanx is not known, but the King, the Archbishop of St Andrews (James's illegitimate son, Alexander), bishops and abbots, and an array of great aristocrats, all fought on foot with pikes. Edward Hall was thrilled by the 'noble and triumphant courage... [of] a King to fight in a battle as a mean soldier'

But fighting as 'a mean soldier' made James, conspicuous in his fine armour and surcoat, particularly vulnerable, and unable to function effectively as a commander.

Despite having borne the brunt of the English artillery barrage at the start of the battle, the King's division advanced in good order, negotiated the burn at the foot of Branxton Hill, and regained enough momentum in its charge up the ridge that the opposing English division was pushed back 'by a long bowshot' (around 300 yards).

Lord Home had demonstrated the psychological power of the phalanx, and now King James revealed its physical power. But any student of the Classics would recall that, while the Romans had often been pushed back by Macedonian pike phalanxes, rarely had the more mobile legions been broken. So it was with the English at Branxton

Bill against pike

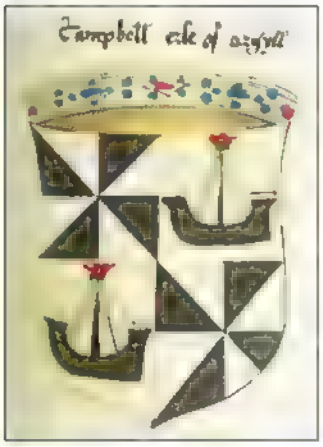
King James's division charged, naturally, against that of the English commander, Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey. A veteran of the Wars of the Roses, the 70-year-old general was as tough, experienced, and wily as they come Surrey was an abrasive character, but utterly competent. Despite his Yorkist past – he had fought at Barnet and Bosworth – he had established himself as a valued servant of the early Tudor kings, Henry VII and Henry VIII

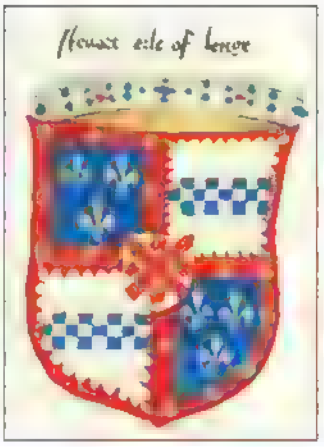
The earl had arrayed his men in a linear formation. The centre met the charge of the Scottish phalanx and was pushed far back, but it did not break James's impressive assault took him far, but the flanks of the Scottish phalanx were enveloped by the wings of the longer English formation. King James's division was dismantled in the same manner as the phalanx of Crawford and Errol

Both divisions were enveloped, but not yet totally surrounded The rear ranks of the Scottish phalanxes, composed of commoners, eventually ▷

Below The tomb of Thomas, Lord Dacre, in Herstmonceux Church (the armoured effigy was recycled from an earlier memorial). At Flodden, Dacre's swift intervention restored the right wing of the English army after Home and Huntly's initial assault.

Image: © D Collins





Above Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy's portrait in *The Black Book of Taymouth*. The 'white harness' (full plate armour) of the Scottish nobles protected them from arrows but could not withstand repeated blows from English bills.

Above & right of Flodden

broke and fled. But there was no such option for the gentry in the leading ranks.

Even when the English had so thinned the Scottish front ranks that each man was faced by four or five billmen, the Scots refused to flee. They had come to conquer, and having failed in that endeavour, they determined to die hard.

The Admiral, who disliked James IV intensely, would not disguise the fact that the King was killed within a spear's length of the Earl of Surrey, and in doing so tacitly admitted just how close-run the battle was. Other contemporary accounts of the battle remark on the unusual quiet of the Scots as they advanced, came to handstrokes, and fought and died

Outflanked

The Earl of Huntly and Lord Home, having successfully reorganised their division on the slopes of Branxton Hill, were afforded a clear view of the rout of the central Scottish phalanxes. Huntly desired to march to the relief of the King, but Home disagreed we have fought and won our battle, he said, let the rest do the same.

Home was too pragmatic a fighter to gamble his intact division in a rescue attempt. The King was either killed or captured and, as the Lord Chamberlain of Scotland, Home had to think of the defence of the nation. Better to act as a rallying point for the fugitives and to preserve a significant fighting force: English reprisals were certain to follow.

Huntly did set out to relieve the King, but the futility of his mission became clear, and he resigned himself to retreating back to Scotland with Home. Huntly's decision was probably influenced by the destruction of the Scottish right wing.

Sir Edward Stanley's defeat of Argyll and Lennox's division was the final blow. Arriving late, Stanley's 3,000 Lancastrians and Cheshire men had not formed up on the extreme left of the English battle-line, but had marched, apparently unobserved, around to the eastern flank of Branxton Hill at Mardon. With the gullies at Mardon concealing their movements (the Scots may have assumed these features would secure their flank), the Englishmen gained the eastern summit of Branxton Hill and, if we follow *The Trewe Encountre*, fel.

Below left resistance, captured two Scottish banners with his own hands

Below centre & right

Right Hans Burgkmair's famous contemporary woodcut of the defeat of the Scots at Flodden James IV lies dead in the foreground, and the shaft of the royal standard is broken.
Bottom The bill was the key to English success at Flodden. Handier in close combat than the unwieldy pike, it smashed through the Scots' heavy armour

on the unsuspecting Highlanders as they began their march to relieve the King's division. Taken in the flank and rear, the Highlanders were driven down the hill into the chaos of the King's dissolving division

The last attack

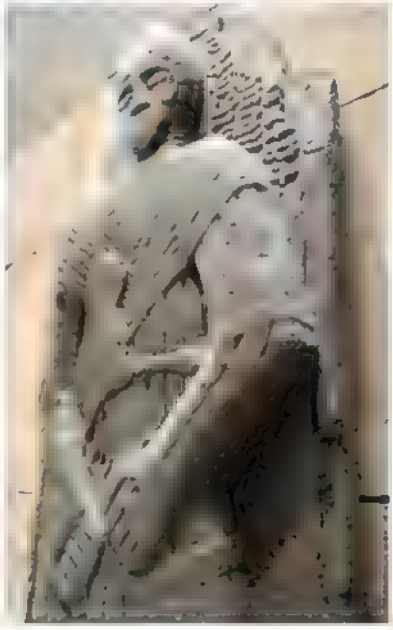
The Highlanders were not organised as an offensive pike phalanx, but the outcome of the battle might have been very different if they had participated in the echelon assault and dealt a second blow to the left of Surrey's division

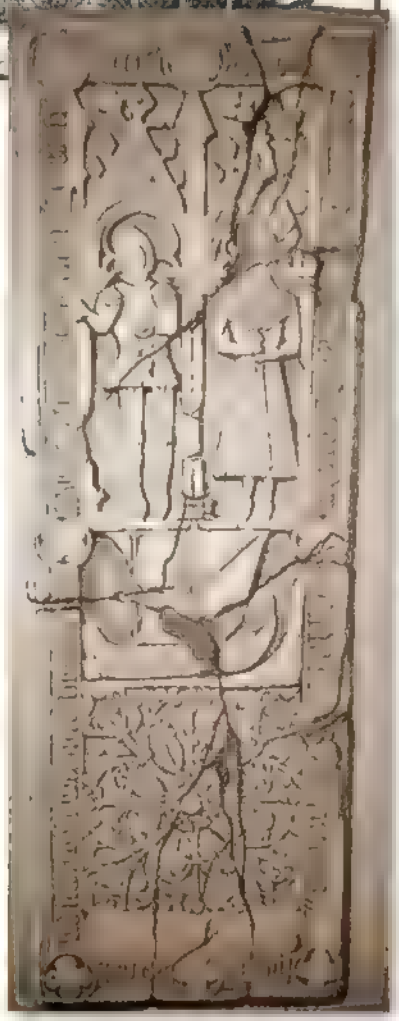
The Highlanders were well armoured in plate, mail, or quilted fabric coats, and wore their favoured old-fashioned bascinet helmets. They were armed with bows, long-handled axes, and two-handed swords, and would have fought in a relatively open order. Unlike the pikemen, they were equipped to play the English archers and billmen at their own game, but Stanley unleashed his volleys and charged the Highlanders' blindside as they moved down the hill.

The Battle of Flodden is often portrayed as a glorious Scottish defeat, made poignant by the heroic death of a popular King and the flower of the nation's nobility. But romanticism should not obscure the fact that the Scots were the invaders, and that they were trounced by a (somewhat) smaller opponent. On the very threshold of England (Branxton is only five miles from Coldstream on the Scottish border), the Earl of Surrey and his valiant yeomen had out-manoeuvred and out-fought King James and his army.

It was a stunning victory, though not decisive, despite the slaughter of the Scots nobility. The Anglo-Scots Wars rumbled on until 1550 with no definite result

Below Typical Highland armour on a 16th-century gravestab from Islay: bascinet helmet, neck- and shoulder-guard of mail (*pissane*), and a padded fabric coat (*aketon*).
Right John Maclan escaped from Flodden, but was killed five years later in a battle against MacDonald rebels. His gravestab depicts two fighting men, one in plate and the other in Highland armour. Both figures may represent Maclan: one as high officer of the Scottish crown, the other as a Gaelic chieftain.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Ross Cowan is an independent scholar and the author of seven books about the Roman Army, including *For the Glory of Rome* and the forthcoming *Roman Guardsman, 62 BC AD 324*.

Image: © Lichfield District Council

Events Guide

Each month, *Military History Monthly*'s 'On Manoeuvres' section brings you details of Britain's finest history-themed activities, from lecture days and air shows, to militaria fairs and re-enactments. With Autumn soon upon us, we take this opportunity to draw particular attention to six of the best indoor and outdoor events taking place over the coming months.

Weetwood Hall

Weetwood Hall Conference Centre and Hotel is launching its First World War In Retrospect Conference from 28 July 2014 to 1 August 2014. This is to acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, and will be the first in a series of annual conferences based upon the First World War to be hosted at Weetwood Hall through to 2018. The five-day conference will cater for residential and non-residential participation, with all the accommodation, catering, and events included in the conference programme.

The conference has been planned – by Dr Peter Liddle, Conference Director, and Colonel Alan Roberts, Military Consultant – for like-minded enthusiasts and experts to listen, reflect, network, and acquire a fresh perspective

All this and more is to be brought to the delegates at this imaginative conference by a team of talented men and women accustomed to sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with audiences from a wide-ranging interest in the First World War

Peter Chubb, Development Director for Weetwood Hall said, 'I am inspired by what we have achieved in the researching and organising of the extensive programme, quality speakers, and events for our 2014 First World War Conference. Working with Dr Liddle and Colonel Roberts has been a most enjoyable experience.'

WHEN: 28 July 2014 to 1 August 2014
WHERE: Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel, Otley Road, Leeds, LS16 5PS
HOW MUCH: For information on prices, please visit the website.
WEB: *www.weetwood.co.uk/firstworldwar*

Dig in and dig deep with The Soldiers' Charity Big Curry

Everyone loves a good curry, and the bigger the better! So a 'Big Curry' is a great way to have fun with family and friends while raising vital funds for ABF The Soldiers' Charity

We have been helping support soldiers, former soldiers and their families since 1944. This October you can help to by raising money with your very own Big Curry.

Eat In: Hold a curry night at home – either home-cooked or take-away – and ask your guests to 'pay' in donations.

Eat Out: Visit your local pub or curry house with friends or family and match the price of the meal in donations

You will find lots of fundraising ideas, resources, and recipes on our website. How you host your Big Curry is up to you, but whatever you do, please do something, because our soldiers need us just as much as we need them.

WHEN: Throughout the month of October
WHERE: In your home, your office, your local pub, or wherever you like!
HOW MUCH: Raise money by selling tickets, or holding a raffle or sponsored chilli challenge.
WEB: *www.bigcurry.org* or phone 020 78113960

Birmingham Tattoo

Britain's biggest indoor military tattoo, with over 1,200 performers, will celebrate its silver anniversary this year by bringing together marching bands, gymnasts, dog display teams, field guns, and many other performers to the NIA in Birmingham.

For this year's special event, the organisers have brought together military bands from Norway, Belgium, Slovenia, and our own forces including the Royal Air Force. Representing Norway will be the world famous Band and Drill Contingent of the King's Guard. Joining them will be the Royal Band of the Belgian Navy and the Slovenian Services Band. The RAF Band will demonstrate their musical skills in this special year which also marks the 70th Anniversary of the RAF Association. Representing the youth of the UK will be the Air Training Corps National Band and the National Youth Marching Band.

Complementing the music of the massed bands will be the thrills of the exciting displays including the much-celebrated Inter-Service Field Gun Competition.

The Tattoo will culminate in a spectacular grand finale featuring all performers in a spectacle of light and sound. They will be joined by the British Tenor Tim Pitman and the UK's new singing sensation Rebecca Robinson in the special 25th anniversary finale. The event would not be complete without the ever-popular and spectacular closing ceremony which will feature the Royal Air Force Cosford Queen's Colour and Escort playing the traditional *Land of Hope and Glory*, the *Evening Hymn*, the *Lone Piper* and some special surprises.

WHEN: Saturday 30 November at 6pm and Sunday 1 December at 2pm
WHERE: The NIA, Birmingham.
HOW MUCH: Between £14.50 and £25.00 plus admin and fulfilment fee and are available online at www.theticketfactory.com or by calling 0844 338 8000. Reduced prices are available for children, senior citizens, and groups of 10 plus.
WEB: *www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk*
PHONE: 0844-338-8000 (box office)

International Living History Fair

The International Living History Fair exists to provide a market place, a meeting place, and a fabulous opportunity for all – visitors and re-enactors alike – to meet and discuss all periods of our historical past. Many of Europe's best artisans, craftsmen, and traders are on hand happy to advise on and provide a huge array of items and replicas of our historical heritage.

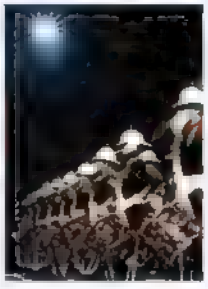
Staged twice a year in February and October, the International Living History Fair has become the primary multi-period market place for re-enactors, historical interpreters, and history enthusiasts across Europe. With over 100 traders exhibiting their wares, you can buy almost any replica artifact you can think of, or kit your self out with historically accurate clothing from most time periods.

New premises at our event site will bring a new dimension to this year's show, and we hope to run a number of lectures, seminars, and public interactive experiences, including 'have-a-go' medieval archery.

WHEN: Friday 25 October (12pm-6pm), Saturday 26 (10am-5pm), and Sunday 27 (10am -4pm)
WHERE: Brunt.ngthorpe, Lexcestershire.
HOW MUCH: £4:50 Adult, Child under 16 £1:50 – Group rates for 12
tickets@livinghistoryfairs.co.uk
WEB: *www.pikeandshot.com/ilhf_traders.html* or email *tickets@livinghistoryfairs.co.uk*

Seafarers UK

supporting seafarers in need, their families and dependants



Seafarers UK is the leading charity for seafarers in need, helping serving and ex-seafarers from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Merchant Navy, and Fishing Fleets when they most require support, including their families and dependants.

Last year grants, totalling £2.5 million, were paid by Seafarers UK to more than 70 maritime welfare charities and other organisations. Receiving no Government support, Seafarers UK relies on donations, gifts in wills, and income from fundraising events.

The charity also raises funds by presenting an annual series of Royal Marines Band concerts around the UK. The popularity and following of the Royal Marines Band Service remains as strong as ever and Seafarers U K is very privileged to present audiences with such consistently wonderful entertainment.

WHEN: Events on from September through til December
WHERE: Dunfermline Carnegie Hall, Perth Concert Hall, Guildford GLive, Tunbridge Wells Assembly Hall, Isle of Wight Medina Theatre, Truro Hall for Cornwall, Edinburgh Usher Hall, Barnstaple Queen's Theatre, Carlisle Sands Centre, Bristol Colston Hall, Folkestone Leas Cliff Hall, Worthing Assembly Hall, Southampton Guildhal..
HOW MUCH: Please contact venues direct for further details
WEB: *www.seafarers-uk.org*
PHONE: 020 7932 0000

Brooklands Museum Military vehicle Day

Over 80 vehicles, spanning the decades and representing the field of conflict from around the world, are expected for our annual Military Vehicle Day. As well as the spectacular displays in the Paddock and around the site, there will be the chance to see some of these machines put through their paces as they tackle the off-road circuit at Mercedes-Benz World at 12.30pm. Many of the Military vehicles will also be tackling the test hill later in the afternoon (weather permitting). All military vehicles and military re-enactors are welcome to park up on the museum site. For up to date information please visit our website: www.brooklandsmuseum.com

WHEN: 17 November 10am-4pm
WHERE: Brooklands Museum, Brooklands Road, Weybridge, KT13 0QN
HOW MUCH: Adults £10, Senior/Student £9, Children(5-16) £5.50, under 5 free, Family(2 Adults & 3 Children) £27
EMAIL: info@brooklandsmuseum.com
PHONE: 0193 857381

Dig in & dig deep with The Soldiers' Charity Big Curry

Everyone loves a good curry - and the bigger the better! So a Big Curry is a great way to have fun with family and friends while also raising vital funds for ABF The Soldiers' Charity

We've been helping to support soldiers, former soldiers and their families since 1944. This year, you can help too by raising money with your very own Big Curry.

You'll find loads more fundraising ideas and recipes on our website. But whatever you do, please do something - because our soldiers need us just as much as we need them

It's spice 'n easy!

Visit bigcurry.org or call 0845 504 0982

OCTOBER 2013

On Manoeuvres

DATES TO REMEMBER

THIS OCTOBER

October A healthy mix of military-history-themed activities lies in store this month. The Western Front Association's national conference returns with 'A World at War, 1914-18', and the Tynemouth World War One Commemoration Project begins its series of eight prestigious lectures reflecting the impact of the Great War. Outdoor types will enjoy the recreation of the Battle of Hastings in East Sussex and the Pickering Wartime Weekend in North Yorkshire, while families are catered for by some excellent activities at HMS *Belfast* and the National Army Museum.

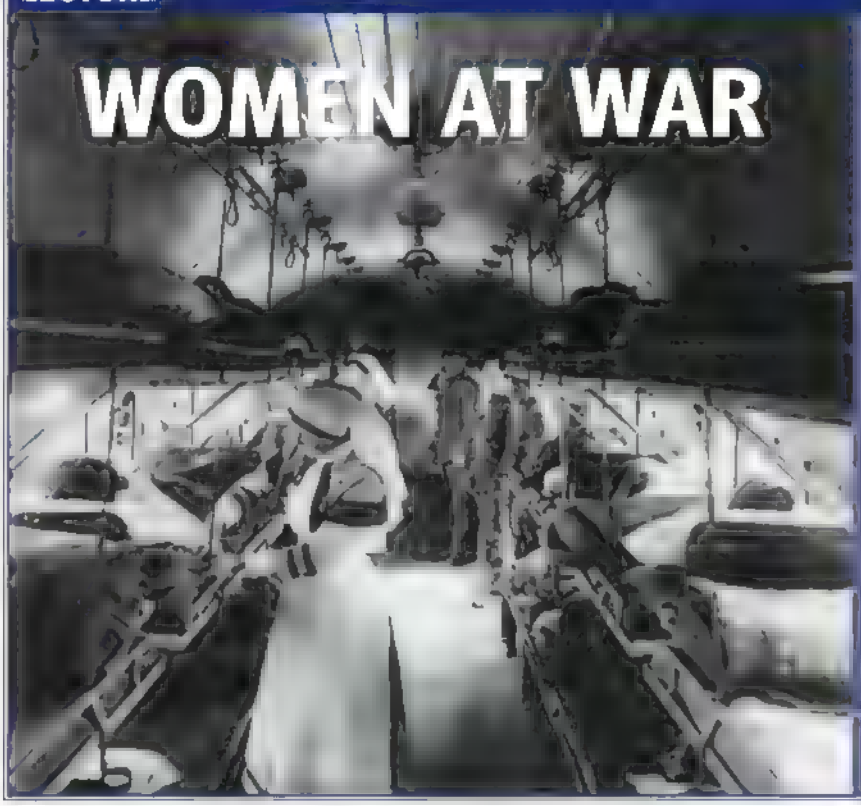
Keith Robinson has been back on the road touring the hidden gems of the UK's military and regimental museums. This month, he finds himself in the Keep of the Gibraltar Barracks in Bury St Edmunds, home of the Suffolk Regiment Museum.

Listings 64

Museum 66

DATES TO REMEMBER

LECTURE



In 1914 the world changed forever. When the First World War broke out, and a generation of men went off to fight, women emerged from the shadows of their domestic lives. Becoming a visible force in public life, they began to take up essential roles – from transport to policing, munitions manufacture to sport, entertainment and even politics.

Bestselling author and former BBC Chief News Correspondent Kate Adie will chart the seismic move towards equal rights with men that began a century ago, and asks what these women achieved for future generations.

Fighting on the Home Front: the legacy of women in World War I
October

Royal Hospital Road
London SW3 4HT

020 7881 6600
www.nam.ac.uk

£10 ENTRY

CONFERENCE

Conflict conference

The Western Front Association's national conference returns with a series of lectures:

- Planning Armageddon? The Royal Navy's strategic thinking and the provisions for war with Germany, Dr Scott Lindgren
- Pre-war civilian life in Britain, France, and Germany: the possibility of war, Dr Adrian Gregory
- The Home Army in 1913; the anticipated role of the territorial force, Dr Bill Mitchinson
- Readying the Rapier: the British Army in 1913, Dr Spencer Jones

The ticket price includes a buffet lunch, and tea/coffee on arrival and during morning/afternoon breaks. There is also an optional three-course dinner for £26.

A World at War, 1914-18: 1913 – prelude to war

[redacted]

[redacted]

£30 ENTRY

[redacted]
www.westernfrontassociation.com

FAMILY EVENT

£14.50 ENTRY

MUSEUM TOUR

Behind the scenes

Following previous events in April, June, and August, the RAF Museum will be holding a fourth evening on Friday 18 October, when there will be no barriers and no limits!

Hear the curator talk about the aircraft in the Milestones of Flight building, explaining how they have come to be at the museum, how they are conserved, and their individual career history. You will then have time to take close-up photographs in the best possible light. We will also have people with personal experience flying or engineering these aircraft to answer your questions.

In Focus: meet the curator

[redacted]

[redacted]

£25 ENTRY

[redacted]

LECTURE

Great War lectures

The Tynemouth World War I Commemoration Project in association with Northumbria University's Department of History has announced a set of eight prestigious lectures over the coming months.

The free lectures, reflecting the impact of the Great War both on participants at the Front and on the lives of those left behind at home, are to be hosted by Northumbria University.

Each presented by an acknowledged expert in their field, the first lecture is delivered by Professor Sir Hew Strachan of All Souls College, Oxford. The talks cover a fascinating diversity of approaches to, and opinions on, the Great War and its effects on the Home Front.

The Ideas of War, 1914

FREE ENTRY

0191 232 6002
www.tynemouthworldwarone.org

EVENT

Forties Party at Pickering

Pickering Wartime Weekend 2013 will get under way on Friday 11 October this year. Pickering Musical Society are already planning their stage spectacular of musical comedy and singalongs, taking place at the Kirk Theatre. A packed audience is expected so book your tickets as soon as you can at www.pickeringmusicalsociety.co.uk

Pickering will again extend a warm welcome to re-enactors and visitors alike over a weekend that promises to be a delight for all.

£15 ENTRY

0845 413 7672
www.pickeringshowground.co.uk

LECTURE

Tank reaction

Jack Sheldon examines the German response to the tank in World War I, from Beutepanzers and the A7V tank to anti-tank weapons and tactics.

After the initial shock of the tank's debut on the battlefield, the German Army knew they had to act.

Jack Sheldon takes you on a journey, using key First World War battles to illustrate the increasing problems faced by the German Army as they set about developing their own offensive and defensive answers to the British tank.

German Responses to the Tank in WWI

£10 ENTRY

01929 462359
www.tankmuseum.org

LIVING HISTORY

One of the most famous battles in England's history, the Battle of Hastings will be brought to life vividly this October by troops from a host of historical groups from Britain and across Europe. Harold's famous shield-wall and William of Normandy's mounted knights will clash in fearsome close-quarters combat, reconstructing the battle that ended Anglo-Saxon England and gave birth to a new era in British history.

£16 ENTRY

FAMILY EVENT

Awesome artwork, horrible history

Horrible Histories illustrator Martin Brown will be bringing his art to life in an action-packed show full of jokes, stories, and live drawing. Find out fabulous facts from history and see Martin produce some of his signature drawings live, using suggestions from the audience. There will also be a chance for budding artists to meet Martin at a book signing after the event. Books will be available at the museum shop.

Martin Brown Draws Horrible Histories
19-20 October 2013

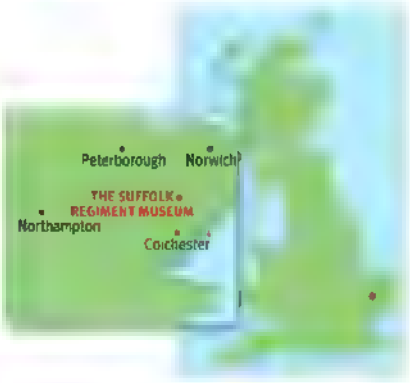
IWM London
Lambeth Road
London SE1 6HZ

£8 ENTRY

020 7416 5000
www.iwm.org.uk

2

The Suffolk Regiment Museum



This month [redacted] pays a visit to Bury St Edmunds, where he explores an excellent regimental museum.

Driving into Bury St Edmunds along the Newmarket Road, one encounters a rather forbidding red-brick Victorian building. This is the Keep of Gibraltar Barracks, now home to the Regimental HQ of the Royal Anglian Regiment, the local Army Recruiting Office, and the Suffolk Regiment Museum.

As part of far-reaching military reforms in the 1870s, a whole series of new military depots was organised. Bury received its new military complex in 1878 to house what would become the Suffolk Regiment. It became known as Gibraltar Barracks only in 1938, named after the Regiment's first Battle Honour. Apart from some of the perimeter walls, the Keep is the only original building to survive.

The museum's entrance is understated, fully in accord with the utilitarian late Victorian military design. This austerity is quickly offset by the warm welcome given to visitors by the volunteer staff.

An introductory display case pulls the visitor into the museum. Past the reception desk, a good collection of medals takes you to the stairs, which carry you up to the glorious main space of the museum. Here, the story of the Suffolk Regiment begins.

Address The Keep, Gibraltar Barracks, Newmarket Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3RN
Open 9.30am-3.30pm 1st and 3rd Wed and 1st Sun each month.

01284 752394
www.suffolkregiment.org

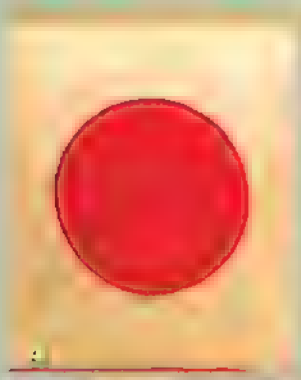
Regimental history

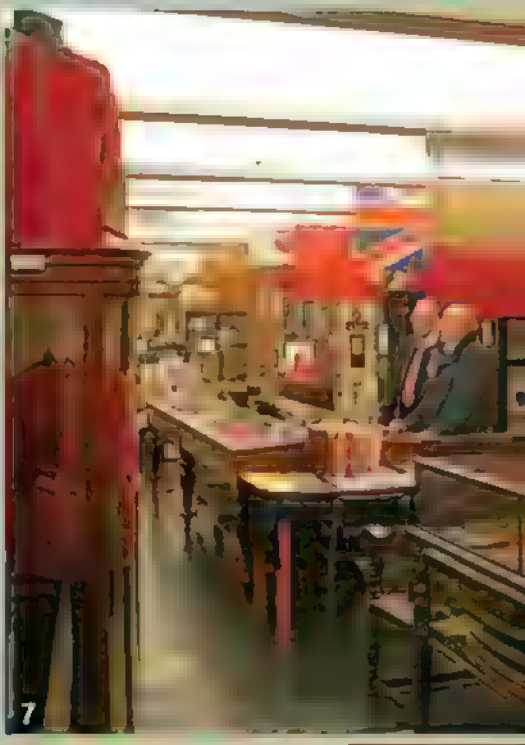
In 1685 James II ordered the Duke of Norfolk to raise a regiment against the threat of the Monmouth Rebellion. The 12th Regiment of Foot included men from both Norfolk and Suffolk, and it was not until 1782 that the title East Suffolk was added to its designation, with Norfolk having been allotted to other regiments.

The Cardwell reforms of the Army in 1873 established the Regiment's Depot at Bury, and in 1881 it formally became the Suffolk Regiment. By the end of the century, some 90% of the men came from the county.

The general layout of the museum is primarily a chronological one, but there are lots of displays to side-track you, and there is nothing to stop you from wandering about as the fancy takes you. The relatively open, yet cosy space allows you to make comparisons between periods or types of artefacts with ease.

At the top of the stairs, the first thing that comes into view is a military life display of the Regimental Band instruments and uniforms. Much is crammed into the cabinets, giving a good sense of the relationship between different items. More modern museums can often make objects more valuable than they are. This may be fine for dress uniforms or pieces of regimental silver, but not for the everyday objects that accompanied soldiers in their day-to-day lives.





1. The museum building
2. Suffolk Regiment uniforms
3. Chinese uniform
4. Japanese banner
5. Rifle display
6. Band instruments
7. Museum entrance
8. Suffolk 1st Battalion drum
9. Princess Margaret cabinet

There is a collection of military uniforms, particularly from the 19th century. An officer's full-dress uniform of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of 1885 sits alongside a Militia officer's full-dress uniform of 1869 to 1890, as well as accompanying the Mess Kit of the 3rd Cambridgeshire Volunteer Battalion of 1880. This range shows the complex mix of formations that go into something as simple-sounding as a county regiment.

It also demonstrates a county link, not just with Norfolk, but also with Cambridgeshire. The 11th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment was known during WWI as the Cambridgeshires, and the museum hosts a display of Cambridgeshire material.

At the far end of the room there is a well-presented display of firearms. Those on the left were all fired in battle by the Suffolks, while those on the right were captured.

Women and children first

The two firearms sections are divided by a spear from the 8th Xhosa War of 1851 to 1853. It was during this campaign that the HMS *Birkenhead* ran aground on the Cape Coast while carrying reserves for the campaign, including men from the 12th Regiment of Foot, with wives and family. Over 300 men died during the incident, including 55 from the 12th. As the men paraded on deck, the women and children went first into the lifeboats, and it was from this incident that the famous maxim 'women and children first' came into being.

A happier story surrounds a tenor drum of the 1st Battalion during WWII. Having formed part of the BEF, the 1st Battalion were forced to withdraw to Dunkirk. However, rather than destroy their drums, they left them at Roubaix with a note saying 'to be called for later'. The drums were hidden in a hat factory or private homes. After D-Day, three of the drums were returned intact, though one was later destroyed by enemy action. The other two went into general use after the war and were lost sight of. However, in 2004 one appeared again on eBay, and was acquired for the museum.

The museum also has a nice collection of flags, which are suspended from the ceiling. There is a flag captured from the Imperial German Embassy in the former Togoland, a Nazi flag from the port of Bremen captured in 1945, and an intriguing Japanese prayer flag taken from a dead soldier at the time of the Battle of Imphal in Burma, also during WWII.

This latter lends a Far East flavour that is taken up in other exhibits. There is a harrowing display of photos of prisoners-of-war held by the Japanese. The Suffolks' involvement in Malaya after the war is shown by a display of the uniform of a 'Communist Terrorist'. Many soldiers involved in the Malayan conflict were National Servicemen, and a corner is given over to them.

All in all, this is a small gem of a regimental museum. Due to its volunteer nature, it is only open at limited times. If your visit to Bury does not coincide with the opening times, there is a splendid introduction to regimental history in the Moyse's Hall Museum in the town centre. This has its own Suffolk Regiment Gallery, with a great display. An excellent taster of the Suffolks' regimental history.

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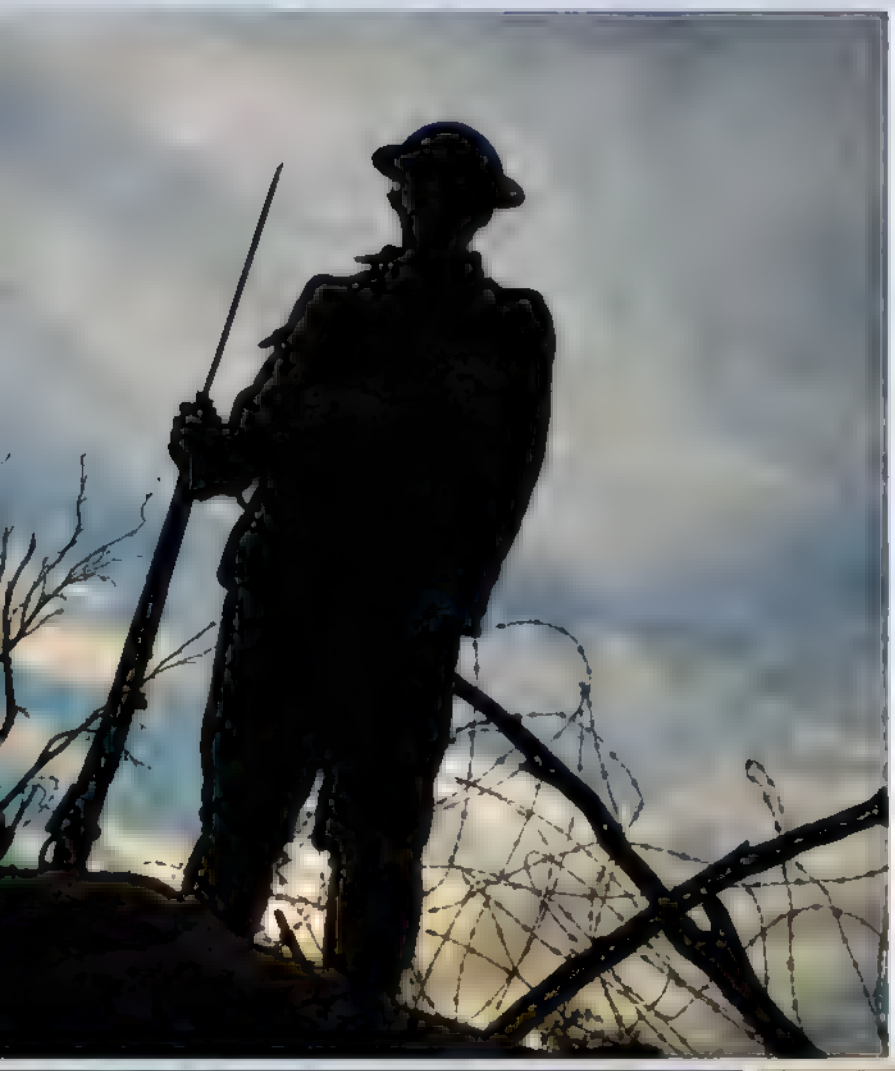
OCTOBER 2013

MHM Reviews

FILM | BOOKS



October What is yet to be learned from modern conflict archaeology? *MHM* editor Neil Faulkner takes a look at Gabriel Moshenska's *The Archaeology of the Second World War* to find out in our lead review this month. Jules Stewart writes about regular *MHM* contributor Dave Sloggett's new book analysing the evolution of airpower over the past century, and historian Eugenia Russell reviews *Byron's War: Romantic rebellion, Greek revolution* by Roderick Beaton.

Our DVD review is set amid the horror and claustrophobia of no-man's-land, where three British soldiers find themselves stranded. Pinned down by machine-gun fire, tested by grenades, and threatened by the imminent danger of a German attack, the men are desperate to find their way back to the safety of the British trenches.

Film 72

Books 74

DVD

FORBIDDEN GROUND

ENTERTAINMENT ONE
19 AUGUST 2013
£8

The nerve-racking new WWI indie drama *Forbidden Ground*, directed by Johan Earl and Adrian Powers, exceeded expectation despite the film's low budget. After moving credits that intersperse modern shots of WWI cemeteries and archive wartime footage, the film throws us into the tense surroundings of a British trench pre-offensive.

One wave of men is sent over the top, but the audience is left to imagine the horror of the attack, as the camera instead focuses on the faces of the men left behind, forced to listen to their comrades being cut down by machine-gun fire. We are introduced to the cool-headed, stoic Sergeant-Major Wilkins (played by director Johan Earl), who is ordered by a stereotypically donkey-brained, obstinate commanding officer to mount another attack. As far as the remaining men are concerned, their fates are sealed.

Considering the small budget, the chaos and terror of going over the top is vividly enacted. Bodies in fox-holes, mud-caked rifles jamming in the arms of wounded men as the relentless German machine-guns pound the ground around them. While this is not a *Saving Private Ryan*-esque gore-fest, you would be hard-pressed to depict such an attack without the occasional bullet to the head or severed leg.

Following the failed attack, the action focuses on three men stranded in no-man's-land. Sergeant-Major Wilkins locates the badly shaken Private O'Leary (Tim Pocock) and the badly wounded Corporal Jennings (Martin Copping). The dark and the mud and the ever-watching crosshairs of the German snipers make for claustrophobic viewing as the three men attempt to crawl their way back to the British line.

The men's fear is palpable, the logistics of transporting a wounded man in increments frustrating, and inter-group difficulties add to their plight. These scenes are gripping and showcase the directorial team's talent for keeping their audience riveted.

Less exciting are the scenes that cut back to Blighty, where Sergeant-Major Wilkins' wife is facing the turmoil of an unwanted pregnancy. Compared to the gripping action unfolding in no-man's-land, this rather soft, soap opera-style drama is unwelcome light relief. However, Denai Gracie does a good job as the lonely wife who wrestles with fidelity, unsure whether her husband is alive.

In all, this is an enjoyable film. Much has been made of the low budget on which it was shot, and it is certainly impressive to have so accurately evoked WWI battlefields on little money from a farm in Dubbo, New South Wales. But regardless of how much was spent creating it, this is a cleverly shot, evocative film that I will undoubtedly revisit in the future.

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Set in 1943, this novel of the Eighth Air Force recounts the combat experiences of a P-47 Group Commander and his romance with an English woman several years his senior. It also tells how, early on, the Americans struggled to realize their goal of daylight precision bombing.

Please visit **www.terencefinnbooks.com**
or telephone The Book Plate in
Chestertown, MD at **410-778-4167**

BOOKS

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR: uncovering Britain's wartime heritage

Gabriel Moshenska
Pen & Sword, £19.99
ISBN 978-1848846418

What a brilliant idea it was to structure this introduction to Home Front archaeology around the people represented. Archaeologists – with their postholes and 'linear features' and 'sub-rectangular enclosures' – can be so dull. Their reports are often dismal lists of undigested data followed by interpretation couched in the impenetrable (and largely meaningless) jargon of 'postmodernism'. So well done to Gabriel Moshenska, a leading academic specialist in modern conflict archaeology, for writing such a supremely sensible and accessible book.

It is not about Second World War archaeology in a traditional 'battlefield archaeology' sense. It is not about metal-detecting for buttons and bullets on the Normandy beaches, for example, a form of activity of far more limited academic value than some archaeologists who should know better are inclined to admit.

The claims sometimes made for battlefield archaeology tend to be inflated. What might have been an overturned ammunition wagon becomes a fierce rearguard action. The discovery that the battlefield signboard is in the wrong field is trumpeted as loudly as if the outcome

was suddenly in question. We should be modest about the significance of the bits and pieces we find on old battlefields.

Moshenska represents a completely different tradition: that of modern conflict archaeology. His starting-point is that the Second World War transformed every aspect of British society. The title is, in fact, a misnomer, for he is not interested in anything outside Britain. His subject is actually the archaeology of the Home Front. Not just in the narrow sense that it was itself a battlefield, a contested zone, subject to maritime blockade and aerial bombardment, and therefore host to an elaborate infrastructure of civil defence and home defence; but also in the wider sense that everyone, from children collecting shrapnel after an air-raid, to women working in munitions factories, to old folks huddled in a basement shelter at the height of the bombing, all were part of the maelstrom of world war.

The archaeological imprint of the conflict is so vast and varied, where do you start? Moshenska's neat answer is to turn the question around and say: what imprints were created by different types of historically recorded activity, and what can we learn from their investigation?

So we have chapters on the Home Guard, the merchant mariner, the war child, the PoW, the RAF crewman, and the Air Raid Warden. Each category of wartime activity is represented by surviving material culture, whether sites still visible in the landscape, remains buried under the modern surface, or artefacts hidden in attics, sold in junk-shops, or mouldering in museum stores.

Why does this stuff matter? What can we learn from studying it? It is the intimate human experience of modern industrialised warfare, and the micro-anthropology of people living, working, and fighting *in extremis*, that is revealed by the Second World War's material imprint. But, for Moshenska, equally important is the role of archaeology in the present. Hands-on contact with material can be electrifying for school-children, the wider public, and the older generation with their wartime memories. And as ever more of the veterans pass away,

> His subject is... everyone, from children collecting shrapnel... to old folks huddled in a basement shelter.

taking their direct first-hand experience with them, the material assumes greater importance in its ability to give immediacy and tangibility to the war.

Sometimes the archaeology facilitates clarification and closure. A particular example is the case of Flight-Sergeant Dennis Noble. The 20-year-old Hurricane pilot was shot down on 30 August 1940 when his 43 Squadron engaged a formation of Junkers 88 bombers and Messerschmitt 109 fighter-escorts. Noble's machine dived into a road in Hove. His coffin was buried with full military honours near his family home in Nottingham a few days later.

In 1996 a team of aviation archaeologists excavated the crash site. The front of the fuselage had buried itself deep in the ground, pulled downwards by the engine's weight. As the archaeologists approached the cockpit, working from above, they found the pilot's parachute, with two blood-stained bullet holes in it. Then they found Sergeant Noble. Around 80% of his body was recovered, along with some personal effects, including his wallet. Now it was clear why some of the bearers of his coffin in September 1940 had thought it unduly light.

One of 'The Few' now rests in the grave cut for him in 1940. Not the least of modern conflict archaeology's roles is to find, recover, identify, and honour 'the missing' – and thereby to help us to remember never to forget.

This is an excellent introduction to what is both a first-rate hobby and an increasingly serious academic specialism.

Neil Faulkner

A Century of Air Power

Dave Sloggett
Pen & Sword, £19.99
ISBN 978-1781591925

The First World War centenary which we commemorate next year will inevitably highlight some of the most dramatic episodes of 20th-century warfare. The Great War saw the end, nearly, of massive infantry deployment in stagnant set-piece battles. The other development was the unveiling of a totally new tool for waging war, with the first intensive military use of air-power.

Old battlefield tactics die hard, if that is an appropriate metaphor, and the aeroplane's use as a source of intelligence-gathering and to help focus the use of artillery was greeted with scepticism and some disdain by certain Old School field commanders. In some quarters there was even an attempt 'to strangle the notion of a separate air force at birth', Dave Sloggett explains in his short, yet meticulous analysis of air-power over the past century.

Dr Sloggett is eminently qualified to tell the story: he has spent more than 40 years as an adviser to the British military, as well as having worked on the development of defence command-and-control systems. He is also an acknowledged expert on the timely and controversial subject of unmanned aircraft.

The author points out that apart from its role as an airborne attack vehicle, air-power is flexible, agile, and adaptable to changing technology and geostrategic viewpoints. This, he contends, is not likely to change in the second century of air-power.

In the space of one hundred years, a mere blip in the history of armed conflict, the development of air-power has outpaced all other forms of land and sea warfare. Confounding its critics, within weeks of the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Royal Flying Corps (the RAF did not come into being until nearly the end of the war) already had aviators detecting large formations of German troops on the ground, enabling the Allies to follow the enemy's movements.

The destructive power of aerial bombing was dramatically demonstrated in the Second World War, and by the time the Cold War was in full swing air-power had come to hold the key to any conflict between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, to the latter's advantage.

Air-power has not only come to be a decisive factor in the outcome of warfare: it has also had a major impact on the way in which wars are fought. This relates to reaction time and the range of measures available to participants to provide an advantage in combat, as well as battle management in the use of air-to-air missiles.

One of the book's most compelling chapters deals with air-to-air case studies. The role of aerial combat has changed almost as fast as the technological advances of the military aircraft that carry it out. The Battle of Britain, gruelling though it was for the men involved, provided a regular respite for the pilots and ground-crew struggling to prevent a German invasion. A little more than 70 years on, 'the outcome of any future conflict will be decided in hours, not the weeks and days of the summer of 1940'.

Jules Stewart

Byron's War: Romantic rebellion, Greek revolution

Roderick Beaton
Cambridge University Press, £30
ISBN 978-1107033085

The 'Sacred City of Messolonghi', western Greece, is the only one to have been declared thus. Messolonghi is revered as the place of Byron's death (1824) and the heroic Exodus during the Siege of 1825-1826, which saw most of the population massacred. *Byron's War* captures the atmosphere in Messolonghi by describing the poet's final 'Hundred Days'. The Greek War of Independence (1821-1832) against a declining Ottoman Empire was fought and won in what Roderick Beaton calls 'The Rebel Imagination' as much as it ever was on the battlefield. Byron's presence in Greece and the impact of his death are better understood if contextualised in that way.

Beaton is original in this telling of Byron's story by his use of Greek perspectives. He follows much of Byron's effort through the eyes of Alexander Mavrocordato, a new insight on how the war was conducted. He highlights two other personalities. They owe their portrayal to their relationship with Byron's associate, Mavrocordato, a politician often detested for his manipulative nature but whom Beaton favours.

The first is Ignatius of Lesbos, Metropolitan of Arta and later Hungary and 'Vlachia' (Wallachia). A man of the Enlightenment, involved in education and publishing, he was mentor to many leaders of the Greek Revolution, such as Mavrocordato.

The second is the Sarakatsan warrior George Karaiskakis, a leading *armatolos* (Christian soldier employed by the Ottomans) from Agrafa in Southern Pindus, a skilled freedom-fighter and the winner of the Battle of Arachova (1826). Karaiskakis died in battle (1827) and was posthumously decorated by King Otto of Greece (1815-1867). He was one of Mavrocordato's foremost foes; Beaton outlines their rivalry before Byron's death and its repercussions.

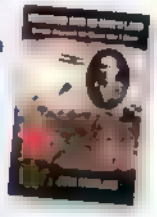
Beaton also paints a third, collective, portrait of the Souliotes, the fearsome Epirot warriors Byron admired. The union of these formidable men and women with the most famous man of his day captured the international imagination and symbolised the struggle. It is interesting that the Greek national poet, Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857), author of the Greek national anthem, pays homage to their bond in his lyrical lament for Byron's passing (*Lyrical poem upon the death of Lord Byron*, 1824). Internal conflict, another theme of Solomos's war poetry characterised the entire war, something that grieved Byron deeply. Beaton alludes to the bitter rivalry between the Souliote families of Botsaris and Tzavellas, which Mavrocordato exploited.

Military historians interested in Byron will benefit greatly from Beaton's book. Importantly, it reflects advantageous access to Greek sources, something no previous Byronic biography has had. In its detailed descriptions it also offers opportunities to appreciate Jerome McGann's elegant declaration that in the Greek cause Byron saw 'the renewal of the value of the individual person'. Indeed, in this statement the man of action is linked to Romanticism.

Eugenia Russell

ON THE HORIZON

London and the Georgian Navy
Philip Macdougall
The History Press, £14.99
ISBN 978-0752474854
A detailed exploration of London's association with the practical aspects of supplying and manning an operational fleet, and shipbuilding, repair, and maintenance. The book also studies the importance of Londoners in the manning of ships, and how the city memorialised the navy and its personnel during times of victory.



Venturing into No Man's Land: Joseph Maxwell VC, World War I hero
John Ramsland
Brolga Publishing, £9.95
ISBN 978-1922036636
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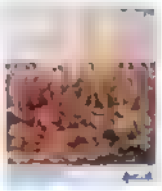
The SBS in World War II: an illustrated history
Gavin Mortimer
Osprey Publishing, £20
ISBN 978-1782001898
This fully illustrated history delves into the wartime exploits of the SBS and, using first-hand accounts and interviews, presents a rare glimpse at their unheralded actions.

Rocroi 1643: the victory of youth

Stéphane Thion
(translated by Elisa Doughty)
Histoire et Collections, €16.50
ISBN 978-2352502555



The Battle of Rocroi (19 May 1643) is one of the most important battles of the 17th century, and one which marked the eclipse of Spain by France as the pre-eminent military power in mainland Europe.

The battle took place towards the end of the Thirty Years War, with Spain, attempting to take advantage of the turmoil caused by the death of the French King Louis XIII, invading northern France and laying siege to the town of Rocroi. But at Rocroi, the French Duc d Enghien (later to be renowned as le Grand Condé as a result of his military prowess), displaying great tactical skill, defeated the *tercios* of the Spanish Army of Flanders (commanded by Francisco de Melo), the infantry formation that had for a century dominated the battlefield.

Not surprisingly, French and Spanish accounts of the battle differ considerably, so much so that there are almost two battles of Rocroi, the French one and the Spanish one. In *Rocroi 1643*, author Stéphane Thion combines both to describe just what happened on that May morning. Thion goes into great detail about not only the campaign itself, but also the composition of both armies, highlighting that the ranks were filled not only with French and Spanish, but also Germans, Irish, Scots, Swiss, and even Croatians.

Histoire et Collections are the nearest French equivalent to Osprey. Their array of titles covers a diverse assortment of subjects, ranging from the uniforms of the Grande Armée and those of the French armies in both World Wars to Airfix soldiers and Matchbox kits. Not all titles have been translated into English.

Rocroi 1643 is lavishly illustrated, with colour on virtually every page (the photographs of French living history are of particular note). While occasionally the translation is a little too literal (for example, the King's Musketeers become 'riflemen'), there is a wealth of information that should prove fascinating to anyone interested in French military history, the Thirty Years War or, indeed, even the English Civil Wars.

David Flintham

Stalin's Claws: from the purges to the winter war

E R Hooton
Tattered Flag, £25
ISBN 978-0954311551

The traditional narrative of the near collapse of Soviet forces in the face of the Nazi onslaught in 1941 is clear. Purges instigated by Stalin and his associates during the late 1930s precipitated a decline in the quality of the Soviet officer corps and therefore the Red Army as a whole. It was unable to respond to the ferocity of the German attack and was hindered by Stalin's near paralysis up to and immediately after the outbreak of hostilities. E R Hooton presents a more nuanced view of the Red Army between the purges and the German invasion.

The statistics of the purges make sobering reading. Between 1936 and 1938 around 21,000 members of the armed forces were tried by Soviet military courts. Moreover, 34,000 officers were discharged from service. The denouncing of military officers by friend and foe alike was often for personal rather than political reasons.

Hutton argues convincingly that one of the major driving forces behind the military purges was a power struggle between conservative elements conveniently clustered round Stalin and emerging radicals who advocated increasing reliance on mechanised warfare. The failure of the latter to demonstrate the power of their concept led to their destruction. The purges inevitably weakened the leadership of the Red Army by removing experienced officers and prematurely promoting unsuitable individuals in their stead.

Yet Hutton notes that the generals and senior staff officers from the Civil War era often relied on a charismatic form of command and were ill-equipped to deal with the new realities of the mid-20th-century battlefield. In contrast, the emerging officer class who completed their training at the General Staff Academy from 1936 possessed the skills and knowledge to counter the German threat.

This book makes an original and insightful contribution to our understanding of the political and social context of the Red Army during the Second World War. It should be read by anyone with an interest in the Soviet regime or the Red Army during this period.

Jonathan Eaton

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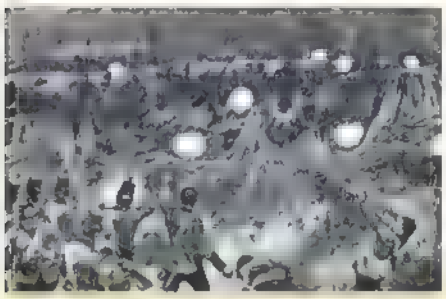

GATE PA

Andy McDonald finds the British unwilling to learn from a shock débâcle at the hands of Maori tribesmen in 1864.

FROM FLANDERS FIELDS TO HELMAND PROVINCE

Anthropologist of war **Nick Saunders** summarises the big ideas in his new book, out for this year's Remembrance Sunday.

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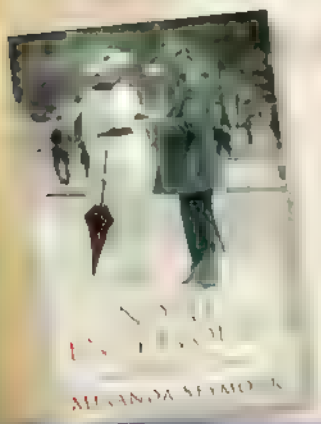

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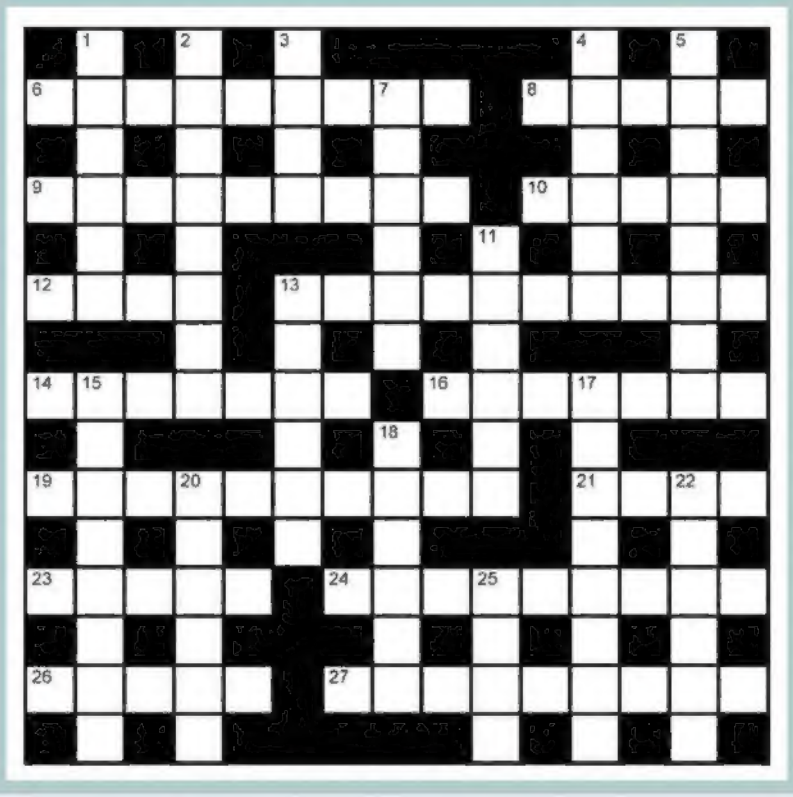

MHM CROSSWORD

Test your military history knowledge in our regular crossword. The answers will be revealed in next month's issue of *MHM*.

ACROSS

6 Battle of the War of the Spanish Succession fought in July 1708 (9)
8 West African kingdom invaded and overthrown by British forces in February 1897 (5)
9 Battle fought in August 1692 during the War of the League of Augsburg (9)
10 Informal term for a French infantry soldier, especially of World War I (5)
12 City, now in the Czech Republic, twice besieged unsuccessfully during the Hussite Wars of the early 15th century (4)
13 City in southern England captured by Parliamentarians in December 1642 (10)
14 Franklin ___, Confederate general in command during the Siege of Port Hudson in 1863 (7)
16 King of Aragon and Navarre who campaigned against the Moors in the early 12th century (7)
19 US president awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross after flying 58 combat missions in World War II (6,4)
21/13D US Defense Secretary during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 (4,6)
23 Small and fast attack craft used by the German navy in World War II (1,4)
24 ___ Massacre, in December 1866, when more than 80 US soldiers were killed by Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho (9)
26 Mathew ___, photographer known for his work during the American Civil War (5)
27 Harbour on the Loire estuary where an attack by the Royal Navy and Commandos took place in March 1942 (2,7)

DOWN

1 US Cavalry officer who commanded the Michigan Brigade during the American Civil War (6)
2 English castle besieged by King Stephen in 1138 (8)
3 ___ Cade, leader of a revolt against Henry VI (4)
4 ___ Scouts, a Special Forces regiment of the Rhodesian Army formed in 1973 (6)
5 George ___, 1st Duke of Buckingham, leader of an unsuccessful expedition to capture Cadiz in 1625 (8)
7 Australian city bombed by Japanese aircraft in February 1942 (6)
11 Battle of the American Civil War fought on 6 and 7 April 1862 (6)
13 See 21 across
15 ___ Schulz, German general fatally injured when leading an attack by the 7th Panzer Division in the Ukraine in 1944 (8)
17 Battle in the Sudan in 1898, a victory for Kitchener against the army of Abdullah al-Taashi (8)
18 Nephew of Charles I who was made Royalist General of Horse in 1642 (6)
20 African country, the scene of savage ethnic conflict in 1994 (6)
22 ___ Lee Chennault, US general who commanded the Flying Tigers during World War II (6)
25 Nickname of the Churchill mine-flail tank (4)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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CAPTION COMPETITION

We continue our caption competition with an image from our Italo-Turkish War feature. Pit your wit against *MHM* readers at **www.military-history.org/competitions**.

WINNER:

Herr Hauptman this Blitzkrieg on horseback doesn't make sense. Dolt, it makes perfect sense...just like the issue 36 crossword!!

Jason Ollis

RUNNERS-UP:

Zis is ridiculous, Hans. I bet the Polish horses have been issued with legs.
Paul Appleby

So, this is the picture that inspired the famous Liverpool song, Jerry across the Mersey
Mick Wyatt

Think you can do better?

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ANSWERS — **SEPTEMBER ISSUE | *MHM* 36**

ACROSS 7 Sparta, 8 Tarleton, 9 Antietam, 10 Innes, 11 Modena, 12 Augustus, 13 Invader, 15 Berwick, 19 Etheired, 22 Albion, 24 Laing, 25 Strachan, 26 Coral Sea, 27 Urartu.

DOWN 1 Sponton, 2 Cruise, 3 Carthage, 4 Irving, 5 Kennesaw, 6 Honshu, 8 Tomcat, 14 American, 16 Eva Braun, 17 Cromarty, 18 Odessa, 20 Talbot, 21 Ragusa, 23 Buchan.

VASA – too much, too soon

Above A view of *Vasa*, from its bow, in Stockholm's Vasa Museum.

During the reign of King Gustav II Adolf (1611-1632), Sweden rose to become the dominant military power in northern Europe on land. But her navy had failed to gain the upper hand over her Danish and Polish neighbours.

In order to dominate the Baltic Sea, Sweden needed a squadron of capital ships. So in 1625 the Dutch master shipbuilder Henrik Hybertsson was commissioned to construct four such vessels. The first of these would be *Vasa*, named after the King's dynastic house. Built from 1,000 oak trees, her masts were 50 metres high and she was armed with 64 guns, of which 48 were 24-pounder cannon.

Until then the most powerful ship in the Royal Swedish Navy was the galleon *Solen*, with 38 guns. Capable of firing a broadside of 300kg, *Vasa* would be the most powerful warship of her time.

On Sunday 10 August 1628, *Vasa* was hauled out of Stockholm harbour for her maiden voyage. She fired a salute and, once beyond the cover of the Sodermalm Cliffs, her sails caught the wind. *Vasa* listed to port, then further, until water rushed in through the open gunports causing her to heel over and sink. She had travelled just 1,300 metres – less than a mile!

The King was furious at this 'foolishness and incompetence'. Following the successful defence of the city of Stralsund, he was poised to invade northern Germany and the last thing he needed was such a public embarrassment.

> To prove the ship's instability, 30 sailors were ordered to run backwards and forwards across the upper deck.

An inquest was held, which concluded that *Vasa* was well-built but incorrectly proportioned. The portion of the hull below the waterline was insufficient for the weight of cannon and rigging, and the ballast was inadequate. But how could this have happened?

We know that Hybertsson died before *Vasa*'s completion, that he had little experience of building ships with two gun decks and, as technical drawings were not used at the time, there would have been no plans to follow.

Prior to sailing, captain Söfring Hansson had demonstrated the ship's instability to Admiral Klas Fleming by ordering 30 sailors to run backwards and forwards across the upper deck. Although still in port, by the third pass the ship seemed poised to capsize. Why the admiral ordered the ship to sail and why the captain failed to order the lower gun-decks closed once outside port we will never know.

What we do know is that *Vasa*'s sister ship, *Applet*, continued in service until the 1660s, which suggests that the design itself was not flawed. *Vasa* was simply launched before the crew were accustomed to such a large vessel, as a result of political pressure.

Incredibly, you can see *Vasa* today. Her wreck was located in the 1950s, and she was salvaged in 1961. She is now on display in the Vasa Museum in the Swedish capital.

Below The *Vasa*'s lower gun-deck.

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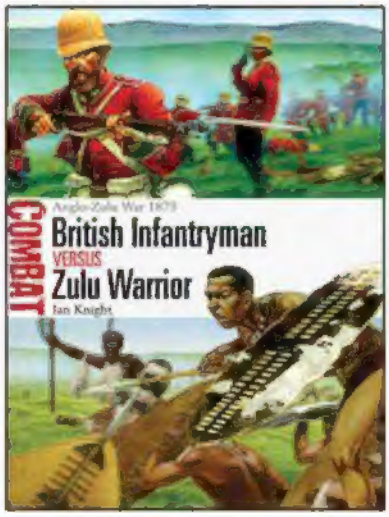

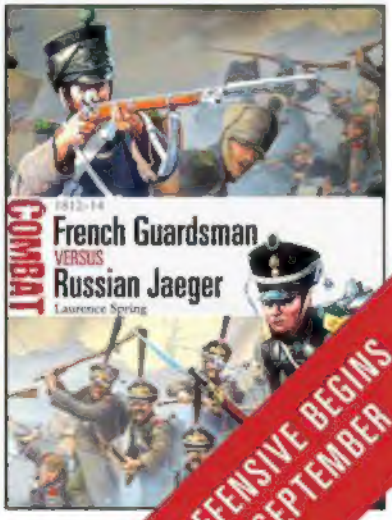

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